

ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY:  
FINDINGS FROM A COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

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## ABSTRACT

### ADJUSTMENT EXPERIENCES OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY: FINDINGS FROM A COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

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The present study aimed to understand the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees, who are resettled in Ankara, Turkey, with respect to their strengths and assets. This study conducted under the framework of a community-based participatory research approach (CBPR). Seven adult Syrians (4 females, 3 males) with a mean age of 24.14 (SD=4.33) were reached with the help of community partners and attended in semi-structured interviews. The content analysis of the interviews was completed

through a qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti.. Research partners are involved in the analysis by providing feedback on completed analysis.

Results of the study pointed out that language barriers, acts of discrimination, unemployment, being exposed to multiple losses and being away from their family members were negatively correlated with refugees' psychosocial wellbeing and adjustment as well. On the other hand, understanding the language, being employed, accessing to basic rights and social and economic resources, having previously settled relatives in Turkey and getting citizenship appeared as positive factors impact refugees' adjustment process via decreasing number of resettlement stressors and pave the way for accessing to other resources. Moreover, family ties and social network, hope for future, similarity of cultures and relative freedom for Syrian women appeared as strengths and assets of Syrians. These results are discussed in relation to refugees' resettlement and adjustment process literature. The implications of the results were provided for policy makers, psychological health professionals and non-governmental organizations (NGO).

**Key words:** Refugees; Syrians; Community-Based Participatory Research; Adjustment

## ÖZ

### TÜRKİYE’DE BULUNAN SURİYELİ MÜLTECİLERİN UYUM DENEYİMLERİ: TOPLUMA DAYALI KATILIMCI ARAŞTIRMA BULGULARI

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Bu çalışmada, ülkelerinde meydana gelen iç savaş sebebiyle Suriye’den Ankara’ya zorunlu olarak göç etmek zorunda kalan Suriyeli mültecilerin yeniden yerleşme deneyimlerinin sağlamlıkları ve varlıkları açısından incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışma, toplum temelli katılımcı bir araştırma (TTKA) yaklaşımı çerçevesinde yürütülmüştür. Toplum ortakları ulaşılan ve yaş ortalaması 24.14 (SD=4.33) olan yedi yetişkinden (4 kadın, 3 erkek) oluşan örneklem üyeleri yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere katılmıştır. Görüşmelerin içerik analizi, Atlas.ti nitel veri analiz programı



kullanılarak tamamlanmıştır. Araştırma ortakları, tamamlanmış analizler hakkında geri bildirim sağlayarak analiz sürecine dahil olmuşlardır.

Araştırma sonuçları, dil engelleri, ayrımcılığa maruz kalma, işsizlik, çoklu kayıplara yaşamak ve aile üyelerinden uzak olmak gibi risk faktörleri, mültecilerin psikososyal refahı ve uyumu ile negatif ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Öte yandan, dili anlama, temel hak ve sosyal ve ekonomik kaynaklara erişme ve Türkiye'de daha önce yerleşmiş akrabalarının olması, istihdam edilme ve Türk vatandaşlığı alma mültecilerin yeniden yerleşim streslerinin azalmasına yardımcı olarak mültecilerin uyum sürecini kolaylaştırdıkları bulunmuştur. Ek olarak, aile bağları ve sosyal ağlar, gelecek için umut taşıma, kültürel benzerlik ve Suriyeli kadınlar için Türkiye'de göreceli özgürlük mültecilerin sağlamlıkları ve varlıkları olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sonuçlar mültecilerin yeniden yerleşim ve uyum süreci literatürüyle ilgili olarak ele alınmıştır. Politika yapıcılar, psikolojik sağlık profesyonelleri ve sivil toplum kuruluşları (STK) için sonuçların çıkarımları sağlanmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Mülteciler; Suriyeliler; Toplum Temelli Katılımcı Araştırma; Uyum

To my husband Ali Furkan Yılmaz  
and  
My parents Saliha Altunay  
&  
Abdulhalim Altunay

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Agency
APA	American Psychology Association
BMMYK	Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Yüksek Komisyonu
CAB	Community Advisory Board
CBPR	Community-Based Participatory Research
COMCEC	Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation
CR	Community Researchers
DGGM	Directorate General of Migration Management
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
HSEC	Human Subjects Ethics Committee
İAEK	İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LFIP	The Law on Foreigners and International Protection
METU	Middle East Technical University
N	Number (Sample number)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
RCO	Refugee Community Organization
SES	Socio-Economic Status
STK	Sivil Toplum Kuruluşu
TA	Topluluk Araştırmacısı
TTKA	Toplum Temelli Katılımcı Araştırma
UEAM	Uygulamalı Etik Araştırma Merkezi (Ethics Committee)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refuge

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background to The Study**

Movements of refugees are not new and throughout the human history, people forced to leave their homelands because of war and political struggles. The phenomenon of forced migration also dates back to this history. A vast number of people are displaced within and between the boundaries of countries since 1945 (Ingleby, 2004). Within the last few years, Syrian war resulted in millions of people to leave their homes and search for safe places to live both in their own country or in host countries. Because of this displacement, millions of Syrian refugees fled to Turkey that they believe to be a safe place. Currently, there are 3.5 million registered Syrian refugees in Turkey (UNHCR, 2017). Syrians are still defined as the largest forcibly displaced population when it compared with its national population (UNHCR, n.d.).

Migration impacts can be observed both at community and individual levels (Roizblatt & Pilowsky, 1996). At the community level, people who migrate may lose their cultural norms, social support systems and religious traditions which may affect their mental health. At the individual level, migration is a process that may increase the prevalence of showing mental health problems or it may create an opportunity for growth (Roizblatt & Pilowsky, 1996). The process of migration is described in three stages namely, pre-migration, transition or migration, and post-migration or resettlement process.

Pre-migration process involves the decision to move. At this stage, individuals make the decision to move to another place, region or country. During the process of migration refugees exposed to traumatic experiences that disrupted their psychosocial well-being and sense of safety. Davenport, Moore, and Poe (2003) reviewed research results from 129 countries for the years 1964 and 1989 to explore why persons flee their homes to become refugees. According to their research results, the most significant factor for individuals to migrate are threats to personal integrity. Torture, imprisonment, and murders by the state threaten individuals' security. The political threat caused by the state and dissident behaviors (such as violent protest and terror campaigns) forced people to leave their homeland. Therefore, people choose to flee with the expectation that their situation would be better and they will feel more secure when they reach a safe place. Davenport et al., (2003) argued that the decision to move do not be made in isolation. People make decisions to relocate via relying on the information come from other people who face similar circumstances and successfully relocated.

The transition process is the transportation of individuals from one place to another. During migration, refugees experience uncertainty about their destinations as well as their future. The migration process is a resource loss period in which refugees are at high risk to lose their personal, material and social resources. Ryan, Dooley, and Benson (2008) stated that the duration and circumstances of the migration process are not the same for all individuals who migrate. People may use a plane and arrive in a safer way for the host country. On the other hand, refugees may choose to arrive in receiving country via illegal ways and their journey to a new country may be full of danger and suffering.

The post-migration process defined as "absorption of the immigrant within the social and cultural framework of the new society" (Bhugra & Becker, 2005, p.19). After arriving at the host country, adjustment to a new country becomes significant for the refugees. During their resettlement process in foreign countries, refugees must adapt to complex and compelling situations. After arriving in the host country, refugees experience the migration stress in line with the sudden changes in their lives. Earnest,

Mansi, Bayat, Earnest, and Thompson's (2015) study showed that language, social activities, and support are found as critical factors for successful resettlement. Moreover, pre-migration traumatic experiences and post-migration difficulties together affect the psychological well-being of refugees. Sack and colleagues (1996) stated that earlier war trauma and post-resettlement together increase refugees' vulnerability to mental health disorders. This study is consistent with Heptinstall, Sethna and Taylor's (2004) study which showed important relationships between pre-migration traumatic experiences and post-migration stressors and psychological well-being of refugees.

Forced migration creates some hardships during the resettlement process. A vast majority of the research with forcibly displaced refugees worldwide shows that the rates of mental health among refugees are higher than the rates of the general population. Mental health of refugees impaired with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety. Moreover, studies show that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)'s, depression and anxiety are the most commonly seen mental health disorders among the refugee population. Post resettlement stressors and discrimination are associated with higher risk for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008). Also, being exposed to severe traumatic events is shown as a reason for the high prevalence of the mental health disorders. Studies conducted by Labys, Dreyer, and Burns (2017) and Beiser and Hou (2017) indicated that refugees have a higher level of mental health problems than other migrants and reported distressing feelings related to post-migration stressors. Beiser and Hou's (2017) study aimed to investigate whether refugees have a lower level of positive mental health than other migrants. To address this question, Beiser and Hou uses data from Statistics Canada's 2013 General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative household study that included 27,695 Canadians 15 years of age and older and compares self-reported positive mental health among 651 refugees, 309 economic immigrants, and 448 family class immigrants from 50 source countries. Perceived discrimination, affiliative feelings toward the home country, sense of belonging and availability of social networks were factors that explained refugee mental health disadvantage. Labys et al.'s (2017) study aimed to gain a deeper

understanding of refugee experiences in South Africa. Semi-structured interviews with 18 adult refugees from Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo were conducted. Refugees reported that they were facing hardships in the host country which include xenophobia, physical abuse, and work obstructions. Refugees feel powerless, hopeless and were in emotional pain. All of these factors jeopardize refugees' psychosocial well-being. Steel, Chey, Silove, Marnane, Bryant, & Van Ommeren (2009) undertook a systematic review and meta-regression of the prevalence rates of PTSD and depression in the refugee and post-conflict mental health field. In their meta-analysis of 181 studies from 1980 to 2009, over 80,000 refugees were assessed. Steel et al. (2009) reported that risk factors such as torture, loss of loved ones and other traumatic experiences increase the vulnerability of refugees' mental health outcomes. PTSD's prevalence among refugees is 30.6 percent and depression's prevalence rate are 30.8 percent.

Qualitative research conducted by Roizblatt and Pilowsky (1996) with families of forced Chilean migrants shows that many of the refugees who are tortured before they forced to leave Chile and after they leave they suffer from severe PTSD. The survivals of the military coup either uses avoidance via ignoring the severity of the happenings or uses denial as defense mechanism via continuing their everyday life and keep going to their jobs as they do every day (Roizblatt & Pilowsky, 1996). After going to a new country, the Chilean families face with language difficulties because of not knowing the language of the country, lose their social network and having hardships with the new culture since it was different from their own culture (Roizblatt & Pilowsky, 1996). Despite running away from the persecution and survive their own lives, individuals felt guilty of leaving their home country, kept thinking about what was happening in their country which resulted in affecting their current adaptation and they mostly fail to fulfill the demand of resettlement (Roizblatt & Pilowsky, 1996). The nature of their migration and the guilt they experience result in a delay of their adjustment to the new country (Roizblatt & Pilowsky, 1996). The research results also indicated that, refugees that come voluntary shows important effort to adjust to the new country they arrived when it compared with the ones that forced to flee (Roizblatt & Pilowsky, 1996).

## **1.2. Purpose of The Study**

Resettlement process is complicated and troublesome in its nature. Existing literature already documented the human responses to forced immigration. Majority of these studies aimed to address the needs and issues of refugees, yet very few studies attempted to identify their assets and strengths along with their struggles. Despite their hardship refugees, they are tenacious survivors as they keep their hope for the future. The related research has yet to offer suggestions on what helps refugees to keep hope for the future, what is their meaning-making of their experiences, and what factors may hinder or ease the adjustment process. Therefore, the major aim of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees, resettled in Ankara, with respect to their strengths and assets as well as their struggles. The present research paid special attention to the roles of cultural beliefs and practices. The facilitating and hindering factors of the adjustment process were aimed to be explored as well as how these factors exacerbated their overall wellbeing.

## **1.3. Significance of The Study**

First, the study intended to understand the resettlement experiences of refugees. Examining the existent literature reveals that majority of the research explored physical problems and psychological responses of refugees in terms of traumatic life events. Refugees are presented as helpless victims and their sources of strength are overlooked (Chung, Shakra, AlQarni, AlMazrouei, Al Mazrouei & Al Hashimi, 2018; Steel, Dunlavy, Harding & Theorell, 2017). There is not adequate recognition of the ways and resources refugees use to adjust to the new environment. Current research aimed to understand the strengths and assets of Syrian refugees and the factors that influence their adjustment process. Such an understanding should help to provide better prevention and intervention programs for considerable numbers of refugees in Turkey. As the related literature implies, the best intervention programs assist refugees to discover their inner strengths and to recognize that they hold the potential to flourish.

Secondly, with the growing number of refugees being resettled in Turkey, an increasing number of refugee population became integrated into each aspect of daily life such as education, labor market, health services. As Turkey continues to become more diverse, current intervention programs that address individuals' needs may become inadequate in terms of cultural sensitivity and become insufficient to meet the participants' needs whose Turkish is not their primary language. Understanding culture and its influence on behaviors and help-seeking activities of refugees are vital for service providers. If cultural factors are not taken into consideration, the provision of intervention programs may be inefficient or harmful. Therefore, culturally appropriate interventions that are tailored towards Syrian refugees are significant. The results of the present study emphasize the significance of understanding the factors that both ease and impede the adjustment process of Syrian refugees. The results of the present study can be utilized by the counselors, educators, psychosocial centers and personnel who work in the field of refugees in the advancement of refugee resettlement support systems which can promote successful adjustment. By knowing which factors contribute to and which harm the adaptation process of refugees and understand Syrian refugees' assets and strengths, those who work in the field can develop intervention strategies that are specifically tailored towards Syrian refugees and thus, more refugees can benefit from them.

Additionally, gender differences in terms of adjustment were also investigated. Refugee women are considered vulnerable groups since they can be exposed to exacerbated domestic, sexual and gender-based violence through war. Majority of Syrian refugees are women and it is significant to recognize gender-specific problems that affect Syrian refugee women process of adjustment. An investigation of gender-specific psychosocial responses requires to understand the various needs of refugees and how gender-specific reactions are manifested. By knowing these factors, the intervention strategies can be modified to consider the different needs of refugees and thus address both culture and gender-specific issues of survivors.

Moreover, growing number of refugees, which is mainly due to the Syrian war, continue to resettle in Turkey and refugees' return to live securely in their home



country is not an early possibility for many years and even if it is, some may not be willing to return (Hynes, 2003). Any solutions derived without the involvement of the Syrian community may either be insufficient or ineffective to promote successful adjustment process and even it may exacerbate the problems that exist. This research contributed to the knowledge of understanding strengths and assets of Syrian refugees and also the factors that hamper or ease their resettlement process from a community-based approach by adding the knowledge and voice of Syrian community partners. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) which value to the active engagement of community members, community organizations and researchers in each phase of the research process (Holkup, Tripp-Reimer, Salois, & Weinert, 2004). Community partners contribute to the research with their expertise and enhance the understanding of a given phenomenon to benefit their community (Halseth, Markey, Manson, & Ryser, 2016). Hence, CBPR utilized to make this research credible via community input, to empower members by admitting them agents who can explore their own situations and explore local people's knowledge and perceptions of their adjustment experience.

To sum, this study intended to elaborate more about the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees via recognizing their strengths and resources that they were utilizing to adjust a new situation instead of imaging them as helpless victims. It is essential to understand culture and gender specific factors impacting survivors' adjustment process. For these purposes, five research questions were defined.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

The research questions of this study were:

1. What are the pre-migration experiences of refugees?
2. What are the post-migration/resettlement experiences of refugees?
3. What factors impact the refugees' adjustment process?
4. What is the role of culture in refugees' process of adjustment?
5. What are the gender-specific issues impacting survivors' adjustment process?

## 1.5. Definition of Terms

**Acculturation:** Dual-process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005, p. 698),

**Adjustment:** The behavioral process by which humans and other animals maintain an equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments (Adjustment, 2018).

**Appraisal or esteem support:** The provision of information in forms of feedbacks that will be useful for the individual's self-evaluation (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2008; Langford et al. 1997).

**Asylum seekers:** People or groups of people who are seeking protection across borders as a refugee within the UN Convention, but their claim for refugee status is not yet determined (UNHCR,2017; Ryan, Kelly, & Kelly, 2009).

**Attention control (AC):** Focusing on the relevant emotions that facilitate emotion-regulation and ignore the ones that are irrelevant or that may hinder the emotion regulation process (Ochsner & Gross, 2005; Troy and Mauss, 2011).

**Community-based participatory research (CBPR):** CBPR is an orientation achieving to create equitable partnerships between researchers and community members.

**Cognitive reappraisal (CR):** Rethinking and reinterpreting the meaning of an event to change the emotional response of it (Ochsner & Gross, 2005).

**Emotional support:** Offering empathy, love, care, concern, trust, and intimacy with the individuals. (Slevin, Nichols, Downer, Wilson, Lister, & Arnott, et al., 1996).

**Forced migration:** Forced migration includes the movement of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) who displaced by conflicts, development projects, both environmental and chemical disasters or famine (FMO, 2012).

**Internally displaced persons (IDPs):** The persons who have been forced to leave their homes because of war, violence, violations of human rights, or because of natural or man-made disasters but not crossed an international border and not protected by international law since they are supposed to be under the protection of their origin country (OCHA-United Nations, 2004; UNHCR, 2017; "What is a Refugee | USA for UNHCR", 2017).

**Informational support:** The provision of information to individuals in form of guidance or useful information that helps the individuals to solve their problems (Janicki-Deverts, & Cohen, 2011; Langford et al. 1997).

**Instrumental support:** Providing individuals with financial aid, economic resources, and services (Janicki-Deverts, & Cohen, 2011; Langford et al. 1997).

**Refugees:** The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol's defines refugee as anyone who "Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (p.14).

**Resilience:** A trajectory in which normal functioning temporarily gives way to a threshold or subthreshold psychopathology (e.g., symptoms of depression or posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD]), usually for a period of at least several months, and then gradually returns to pre-event levels. (Bonanno, 2004, p. 20)

## **1.6. Summary**

Migration is not a new phenomenon and people migrate for centuries. A vast number of people were uprooted since 1945 and within the last few years, millions of Syrians forced to migrate from their homes because of the Syrian war which started in 2011. Currently, there are 3.5 million registered refugees in Turkey and the number of refugees continues growing each year. Refugees' process of migration, which is commonly defined in three main processes (1) pre-migration (2) transition and (3) the post-migration process, result in challenges and hardships through their process of adjustment. Pre-migration experiences of refugees which include but not limited with the loss of loved ones, torture and imprisonment were traumatic experiences that influence individuals' wellbeing. Pre-migration process, which involves the decision to migrate, is studied by experts in the field and researchers found that pre-migration experiences may affect individuals' resettlement process. During their transition process refugees endured long journeys to unknown destinations. Refugees may be exposed to adverse circumstances in that process too. After entering a new country, refugees have to deal with resettlement challenges and difficulties. These challenges are finding shelter and employment, acquiring the language of the receiving country, forming new social networks and so on. Current research intended to understand Syrian refugees' adjustment process via examining the factors, the issues plus challenges that impact their resettlement process. Since the existent literature mostly concentrated on refugees' well-being, current study aimed to study refugees' adjustment process from a culture and gender-sensitive perspective via understanding the ways and resources that refugees utilize.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **2.1. What Is Migration?**

Migration is described as the movement of people from one region or country to another to live a better life (Bailey, 2010). Humans can migrate from one region to another within the borders of their countries and they also can migrate beyond the borders of countries due to several reasons. According to World Migration 2005 report by International Organization for Migration, a country's financial, political, social, religious, environmental and cultural conditions play a significant role in the decision to migrate. These factors can be both push and pull factors for individuals. Push factors (wars, famine, disasters etc.) are those that push people to leave their homes. These factors make the life harder for people and force them to escape their homes for better living conditions. On the other hand, pull factors (better living conditions, better job opportunities, etc.) are the factors that attract people.

People migrate for centuries and migration is always a complex process. The decision to migrate can be given voluntarily or people may be forced to flee their homes (Hynes, 2003). The voluntary or nonvoluntary migration process results in different adjustment experiences in refugees' lives (Hynes, 2003). Both are for better living conditions in common however, forced migration is involuntary and more traumatic for people. People may become distanced from their loved ones, face with different culture and language from their original culture and traumatized before migration. These factors make the resettlement process harder and fraught (Bhugra & Becker,

2005). On the other hand, learning or knowing the language of the host country, finding a job, becoming familiar with the new country's culture and making friendships are some of the factors that promote the adjustment process (Birman & Tran 2008; Stein, 1979). All in all, migration is a major shift in people's lives and resettlement process may become troublesome because of deprivation of some fundamental factors and it may be facilitated with the availability or with acquiring the elements that are required to adjust.

### **2.1.1. What Is Forced Migration?**

Human rights violations, persecutions, violence, famine, and conflicts forced a number of people to flee within or without borders of their countries of origin. Forced migration includes the movement of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) who displaced by conflicts, development projects, both environmental and chemical disasters or famine (FMO, 2012). There were roughly 2.5 million refugees in 1970. The number of forcibly displaced people increased from 33.9 million in 1997 (Apostolidou, 2016). The number of populations forcibly displaced worldwide was 59.5 million by the end of 2014 and 65.3 million by the end of 2015 (UNHCR, 2015, 2016).

The annual report of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), published in June 2017, indicated that by the end of 2016, the number of refugees displaced worldwide is about 65.6 million people (UNHCR, 2017). More than half of the refugees around the world comes from Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan (UNHCR, 2017). Syria with 5.5 million forcibly displaced people, Afghanistan with 2.5 million and South Sudan with 1.4 million comprise 55 percent of all refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2017). Like it was in the previous years, children continue to consist more than half of the refugee population with 51 % and women constitute 49 percent of the refugee population in 2016 (European Commission Echo Fact Sheet, 2017; UNHCR, 2015, 2016, 2017). The displacement reports show a high percentage of displaced women. The increasing percentage of women refugees referred to as "feminization of international migration" (Castles & Miller, 1998).

Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) report that at the end of 2015, the number of forcibly displacement worldwide was higher than the percentage of forcibly displaced people since the end of the Second World War. The world is still experiencing the highest level of forcibly displaced people according to UNHCR's annual report published in 2017 (COMCEC, 2016; UNHCR, 2017). According to Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) report, published in 2017, 31.1 million new refugees displaced by conflict, violence, and disasters within the borders of their countries in 2016; in other words, in 2016 31.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) added to the existing ones (IDMC, 2017). Most of the increase in refugee population was due to Syrian conflict which started in 2011. 2017 European Commission Report states that 6.1 million out of 13 million of Syrian population have to flee their homes, in other words, they internally displaced and 4.8 millions of this people are refugees and seeking safety in neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt.

### **2.1.2. Definition of Refugee, Asylum Seeker, and Internally Displaced Persons**

Refugees are individuals or groups of people who forcibly displaced worldwide because of war and ethnic, tribal and religious violence and fear of persecution and therefore granted with some forms of international protection ("What is a Refugee | USA for UNHCR", 2017). As it was stated above, 65.6 million individuals forcibly displaced and 22.5 million of them are refugees by the end of 2016 (El-Awad, Fathi, Petermann & Reinelt, 2017; "Refugee Statistics | USA for UNHCR", 2017).

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol's definition of the refugee is widely accepted as a legal definition and the Convention defines a refugee as anyone who;

Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual

residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (p.14).

Asylum seekers defined as people or groups of people who are seeking protection across borders as a refugee within the UN Convention, but their claim for refugee status is not yet determined (Ryan, Kelly, & Kelly, 2009; UNHCR,2017). There are 2.8 million people who applied for asylum in 2015 ("What is a Refugee | USA for UNHCR", 2017). Distinction drawing between refugees and asylum seekers are related to their acquisition or non-acquisition of a residence permit and to their reasons for the arrival to that country. Refugees and asylum seekers definition differ in terms terminology, while the former refers to persons or group of people who gain the rights that regulated within 1951 Geneva Convention (UN General Assembly) and given to refugee status by the host state and, the latter, also defined as stateless persons, encompassed the persons who seek protection under the UN convention; however, their refugee status is not still determined in terms of the legal processes of the host country (Ryan et al., 2009).

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are those who have been forced to leave their homes because of war, violence, violations of human rights, or because of natural or man-made disasters but not crossed an international border and not protected by international law since they are supposed to be under the protection of their origin country (OCHA-United Nations, 2004; UNHCR, 2017; "What is a Refugee | USA for UNHCR", 2017). IDPs are regarded as the world's most vulnerable group (Ryan et al., 2009). 40.3 million out of 65.6 million people constitutes the population that displaced internally (UNHCR, 2017; "What is a Refugee | USA for UNHCR", 2017). While refugees crossed the international borders to seek sanctuary, IDPs remained inside their home countries and not crossed borders; even though their government forced them to flee their homes internally, IDPs legally are under the protection of their own states; the states have the primary responsibility to respond effectively to the needs of IDPs (ICRC, 2017; OCHA-United Nations, 2017).



### **2.1.3. Refugees in Turkey**

Since 1980s Turkey undergoes a change in the size and nature of the migration flows (Biehl, 2009). As a country located at the crossroads of migration routes, a huge flow of people seeking protection either come to Turkey or use it as a transit route to reach other European countries like United States, Canada, and Australia.

According to the statistics given by COMCEC (2016) and UNHCR (2017) because Turkey provided asylum to many of these individuals, by 2016 total number of people who are under various forms of protection in Turkey is about 3 million. Turkey, where 1 in 28 people are refugees, is hosting the world's largest number of international forced refugees in 2016 while there are 2.3 million refugees in European countries (COMCEC, 2016; UNHCR, 2017). 98 percent of the refugee population, in other words approximately 3 million of the refugees in Turkey are from Syria (UNHCR, 2017). Apart from Syrians refugees, others originated in other countries mainly Iraq (30,400), Afghanistan (3,400), Somalia (2,200) and Iran (7,000) (COMCEC, 2016; UNHCR, 2017).

Turkey's asylum policies become to receive public and international communities' attention since Turkey recognized as an immigration and transit country for migrants (Biehl 2009; Kirişçi, 2012). Turkey accedes to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; however, the Convention's protection comprises only to refugees come from European countries and not to the non-Europeans which restricts the non-European asylum seekers' right to seek protection and therefore the Convention has geographical limitation (İçduyu, 2015; Özden, 2013; Sarı & Dinçer, 2017). Within the scope of this regulation, Turkey provides only temporary asylum or conditional refugee status to refugees with non-European countries of origin thus can grant them with the temporary protection of the state until they are resettled to a third country by UNHCR (Sarı & Dinçer, 2017). The Ministry of Interior carrying out the procedure for temporary protection in Turkey and issues a residence permit for the individual.

In April 2013, Turkey legislate The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) to regulate the activities and actions related to foreigners such as their mobility procedures, to provide better protection align with human right standards for protecting and to systematize the asylum procedures (DGMM, 2014; İçduyu, 2015; Sarı & Dinçer, 2017). Directorate General for Migration Management has been established. Since April 2014, the law has been enforced and thus Turkey began to provide a protection and assistance to all asylum seekers and refugees regardless of their country of origin (Sarı& Dinçer, 2017). Besides LFIP, a new Temporary Protection (TP) Regulation released on October 22, 2014, enables the refugees to access psychological, social and rehabilitation services for vulnerable groups such as women, elderly people and children, and grants entry to certain professions within labor market (İçduyu, 2015). Thus, Syrian refugees are granted social rights that are currently available to Turkish citizens (Baban, Ilcan & Rygiel, 2017).

#### **2.1.4. Syrian Refugees in Turkey**

Over 11 million Syrians forced displacement either within their countries or across borders (Memisoglu & Ilgit, 2016). More than 6 million Syrian refugees forced to flee their country of origin and sought protection internationally from neighboring countries since April 2011, after the civil war in Syria reached to its northern areas (Cevik & Sevin, 2017). Due to internal conflicts, a substantial number of asylum seekers is pushed to Turkey on 29 April 2011. By the end of April 2011, 250 Syrians crossed into Turkey, 7.000 Syrians same in June 2011 and by the mid-January 2012, the number almost reached 9.500 registered refugees (Özden, 2013).

Initially, the number of displaced Syrians who entered Turkey was small. The number increased substantially each year because of Turkey's temporary protection regimes for Syrians, such as open-door policy and humanitarian assistance. The latest figure is for over 3 million registered displaced Syrians in Turkey (İçduyu, 2015; Özden, 2013; UNHCR, 2017). However, there are unregistered thousands of Syrians refugees residing in Turkey too. Filippo Grandi, the UNHCR high commissioner, labeled Syria as "the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time" (UNHCR, n.d.).

According to Turkey's Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) annual migration report published in April 2017, stated that by the end of 2016 when the distribution of the registered Syrian refugees according to their genders is examined; roughly 1.3 million of the refugees are women and almost 1.5 million refugees are men (DGMM, 2017). Put it differently, females constitute 46,68 percent of the forcibly displaced Syrian population in Turkey and males encompass 53,32 percent of the population (DGMM, 2017).

The ongoing increase in the number of Syrians in Turkey leads to growing needs for assistance. While over 2.5 million of displaced Syrian refugees are living in urban areas of Turkey, the rest of the Syrian refugee population, which makes only a small proportion, living in refugee camps that the government-established (Baban, Ilcan & Rygiel, 2017). The government opens 21 refugee camps which located in 10 different provinces. The camps are managed via the Disaster and Emergency Management Agency (AFAD), the Turkish Red Crescent Society and Turkish Government together (Baban et al., 2017). Humanitarian assistance such as food, psychosocial services, healthcare and so on. are provided to more than 250,000 Syrian refugees via both the help of national and international organizations under the coordination of AFAD (Baban et al., 2017).

## **2.2. Overall Resettlement Experiences of Refugees**

An ordinary person's corresponding to an extraordinary event (e.g., migration) is studied by many professionals across different fields. Migration is a unique change in a person's life and it is a psychosocial process of loss and change. In its nature migration, is troublesome and complicated with its stressors (Bhugra, 2004). The heterogeneity of the migration ends up with different experiences before, during and after the migration of refugees (Bhugra, 2004).

Refugees, unlike immigrants, forced to migrate for a better life because of the destruction of their countries. During their lives both in their own country or in host countries, the pre-migration, in-flight and post-migration experiences may create risks and threat the biopsychosocial well-being of refugees which in turn may increase

refugees' vulnerability for mental health outcomes and impair the resources that can be used for becoming resilient and achieve successful resettlement process. Individuals who migrate experience multiple stresses within their home countries, in flight and after they resettle in the host country. Forced migration brings traumatic experiences and resettlement stressors with it. Silove (1999) defined five areas that trauma may disrupt: 1) personal safety; 2) inter-personal attachments; 3) sense of justice; 4) identity or role; 5) existential-meaning. The deterioration of these areas causes the person to show psychosocial responses which may increase the vulnerability or protect the person from the stressors that person face in life.

Pre-migration events which include but not limited to loss of loved ones, witnessing torture and systematic violence, bombings and imprisonment threaten the personal safety of individuals (Keyes, 2000). The oppression and persecution experiences became a menace to the safety and forced refugees to flee from their own country to unknown for a safe haven (Harris, 2003). Silove (1999) argued that prolonged exposure to traumatic events and losses deteriorate refugees' attachment systems. De Haene, Grietens, and Verschueren (2010) stated that war may result in a threat to family cohesion and also fragmentation of family ties. Through the war, individuals separate from their families and intimate bonds are disrupted. Deterioration of family functioning affects intimate relationships that are supposed to provide safety and recovery to the refugees (De Haene et al., 2010; Morina, Schnyder, Schick, Nickerson, & Bryant, 2016). Refugees who are exposed to interpersonal trauma during war learned not to seek the help of others in difficult times and therefore be reluctant to engage with other people (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2005).

Torture, persecution and human rights violations promote the sense of injustice. Refugees who arrive at safe places may be still in societies lack effective justice systems and the main actors, perpetrators, went unpunished in their motherland (Silove, 2005). Therefore, the survivors face with the inadequacy of existing mechanisms to convict the main actors of crimes committed against humanity. People may express anger and frustration to injustices individually or as a group. The sense of injustice discomfort refugees and found as one of the significant causes of distress

among refugees (Rees, Tay, Kareth, & Silove, 2016). The past and ongoing human rights violations seem to perpetuate the feeling of injustice and exacerbate anger. Moreover, oppressive regimes damage people's sense of identity and control and threaten individuals' feelings and individuality (Silove, 2005). Resettling to new country result in loss of one's own culture and land and threaten the person's identity (Silove, 2005). Forced displacement causes people to feel powerless and challenge their capacity to control their own destiny. Extreme violations and cruelties shake refugees' faith in life and humanity (Silove, 2005). Refugees may feel alienated and isolated emotionally from other people around them.

Researchers who study the psychosocial wellbeing of refugees focus on loss, separation, stress and social support. The increased risk of mental health problems among refugees has been attributed to pre-migration, transition, and post-migration stress. Refugees forced to flee their homes to escape intolerable situations (e.g., internal unrest, torture, human rights abuses, fear of being persecuted for some reasons, loss of family, race, religion, nationality political opinion, repression and so on) to unknown destinations where they may face some extremely stressful times due to uncertainty of their future, threatened sense of safety and traumatic life events that they are being exposed in their country of origin, during the migration and after the arrival to the host country (Straiton, Reneflot & Diaz, 2016; Tribe, 2002; Turrini et al., 2017 ). In other words, refugees endure both physical injuries and psychological effects of cumulative stress over the pre-migration, migration and resettlement periods which may harm a person's self-concept and sense of meaning in life. Previous experiences of violence, political conflicts, torture, trauma and fear associated with the flight from the host country are some of the pre-migration stressors that refugees faced with. During the displacement and asylum-seeking process, refugees faced with stressors such as multiple losses, deprivation of food and shelter, being exposed to physical and sexual assaults. Therefore, forced migration impacts the psychological, social, and physical well-being of individuals.

To conclude, migration is seen as a complicated process in a person's life. During their migration process, from pre-migration to resettlement process, endure difficult

situations which may consist of traumatic experiences. The involuntary nature of their migration puts refugees under greater risks and they may be exposed to cumulative traumas until and even after they arrive at a safe place. Trauma which disrupts individuals' sense of safety, support mechanism, sense of justice, identity and existential-meaning increase refugees' vulnerability to mental health difficulties. Deterioration of these systems causes individuals to lose their resources that they need for successful adjustment process.

### **2.3. Refugee Adjustment**

Adjustment and resettlement of refugees is a challenging and difficult process. Refugees experience many difficulties during pre-migration, in flight and resettlement processes. As they migrate to a new country, place or region, refugees must accommodate themselves to the host country's dominant culture, values and behaviors. Pre-migration experiences, psychosocial outcomes and post-migration stressors hamper refugees' adjustment process. The ones who fail to adapt themselves to the psychosocial processes of the host country will be likely to face the difficulties of psychosocial maladjustment and their resettlement will have interfered. Adjustment defined as "the behavioral process by which humans and other animals maintain an equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments" (Adjustment, 2018). People's effort to maintain a harmonious relationship with the society last till death. Adjustment is, therefore, a behavioral process by which individuals behave in a way to achieve harmony with themselves or the environment with an aim to maintain equilibrium between their needs and the society's norms.

Adjustment is individuals' reaction to the demands of the social environment (Sharma, 2016). Deviation from the environment's norms or failing to cope with the demands of the society are defined as maladjustment (Maladjustment, n.d.). As it was stated above, adjustment can be considered as a process. The the main characteristic of the adjustment process is it takes place in the mutual and harmonious interaction between individual and the environment and it is a dynamic process. The process of adjustment consists of the following stages (1) a need, (2) an obstacle or incompleteness of this

need, (3) various movements or exploratory behaviors combined with critical thinking, and (4) Some reactions that help to complete the change (Sharma, 2016).

Like physiological adjustment, social and cultural adjustments begin with a desire to satisfy or to cope with the needs and be comfortable. Especially in changing environments, people form new relationships and create social networks that will increase their familiarity with the new environment and thus, comfort them to meet both their current and future needs. There are various ways of fulfilling needs. Adaptation, mastery, and conformity are some of these ways (Bhagia, 1966). Adaptation is seen as essential for adjustment and survival. From a biological perspective, the living beings who do not adapt to their environment will become extinct and only the ones who fit will survive. Simich, Beiser, and Mawani's (2003) study showed that support from the environment buffer the effects of stress and help to cope with the stresses of migration. Study results indicated that refugees who receive social and affirmational support from their environment show successful adaptation to a new culture.

Acculturation, which is defined as “dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005, p. 698), is seen as an important factor for successful adaptation. Refugees who face with different cultural values than their own culture had difficulties adapting to a new culture because of the fear to lose their own culture (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008). Ngo, Tran, Gibbons, and Oliver's (2000) study aimed to examine the role of acculturation as a potential mediator or moderator for pre-migration traumatic experiences and depression. In their study with 261 adults Vietnamese Americans, researchers found that acculturation buffer the effect of traumatic stress, enhance the mental health of refugees and help them to achieve a smooth transition into host country's culture. Kovacev and Shute's (2004) study of acculturation in 83 adolescent refugees, aged between 12 and 19, psychosocial adjustment, having positive attitudes toward both sending and receiving country's culture is associated with better psychosocial adjustment. On the other hand, having negative attitudes toward both cultures,

marginalization (rejection of both cultures), separation (rejection of host society's values and maintain only their own ethnic identity) and assimilation (rejection of their own ethnic identity but accept the culture of the host country) were linked to lower psychosocial adjustment. Acculturation occurs only if refugees maintain their own cultural identity at the same time participating in the host country (Berry, 2005).

Lastly, adjustment to the society and harmonious relationship can be achieved by conforming to the society's standards and norms. People conform to decrease society's pressure and to maintain their lives. Not conforming to the society's standards will result in loss of support and approval from other people and also social pressure may grow. Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping, and Goldman's (2002) study aimed to examine the exile-related stressors of 28 Bosnian refugees via using semi-structured interviews. The results of the study showed that lack of mastery and loss of community and support networks affect participants' well-being negatively. Refugees who lack environmental mastery are not able to reach the local resources that can help them to enhance their psychological and physiological well-being which cause distress. Refugees find themselves in environments that require different demands for successful adaptation. These demands involve mastering a new language, cultural values and practices and mastering of other available resources (such as social, educational and economic resources). Mastering at these demands can help refugees to acquire new opportunities, decrease their sense of isolation and increase their sense of efficacy. In another study that aimed to understand the refugees' pre, during and post-migration experiences, conducted semi-structured interviews with 23 Sudanese refugees (Khawaja et al., 2008). Research results indicated that lack of environmental mastery is one of the major difficulties of adaptational demands. Not knowing or learning the host country's language is seen as a major obstacle to participating in social life. Refugees who did not master the language were not able to form new social relationships which cause a sense of isolation and loneliness, to maintain their education and to be employed and therefore, meet their basic needs. Vojvoda, Weine, McGlashan, Becker, and Southwick's (2008) study aimed to describe the evolution of trauma-related symptoms over three and half year in a group of Bosnian refugees, found that PTSD severity of refugees who reported better



mastery of the host country's language decreased over time. Refugees who were not able to learn the language appear under greater risk for developing psychological difficulties.

### **2.3.1. Impacting Factors of Adjustment Process**

Hardships experienced by refugees as they try to adjust to a new environment is explained between the pre-migration experiences and resettlement process. Working with refugees requires defining the pre-migration and post-migration factors that may affect their mental health and how these factors interact with each other. Pre-migration, migration and post-migration stress conditions are studied to identify models of different mental health outcomes among refugees during resettlement. Risk factors (biological, psychological and social risk factors) increase the individual's vulnerability and the likelihood that the person will later develop psychosocial problem (Kaplan et al., 1996). Risk factors are the ones that increase the likelihood that refugees will experience negative consequences during their adjustment processes. Studies show that trauma severity, perceived threat, personal and family history of psychopathology, lack of or perceived social support, lack of education, loss of resources and additional life stress are strong predictors of PTSD (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Ehlers, Mayou, & Bryant, 1998; Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss, 2003). Protective factors play a moderator role, establish a buffer zone between individual vulnerability and life stressors, prevent the problems from occurring and help the individual to function effectively (Greene, Galambos, & Lee, 2004; Masten et al., 1990). Protective factors are those factors which alter an individual's response to traumatic events that may cause maladaptive outcomes (Rutter, 1987). Summary of the protective and risk factors in the reviewed studies are given in the following Table 1:

Table 1

*Summary of risk and protective factors*

<b>Pre-Migration Risk Factors</b>	<b>Post-Migration Risk Factors</b>	<b>Protective Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displacement</li> <li>• Loss of resources (Social, economic and material resources)</li> <li>• Death of significant people</li> <li>• Being terrorized or witnessing torture</li> <li>• Face with persecution or imprisonment</li> <li>• Systematic violence</li> <li>• Deprivation of food and shelter</li> <li>• Physical maltreatment or sexual abuse</li> <li>• Being uncertain about one's destination</li> <li>• Personal and family history of psychopathology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Insufficient housing conditions</li> <li>• Acculturation</li> <li>• Language barriers</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Weak or no social network</li> <li>• Lack of education</li> <li>• Alienation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receiving financial support</li> <li>• Receiving social support (interaction with the host country's network, with friends, family, and relatives)</li> <li>• Use of emotion regulation techniques</li> <li>• Being resilient</li> <li>• Spirituality</li> <li>• Cultural practices (culture of sharing and interconnectedness)</li> <li>• Understanding Language</li> <li>• Being employed</li> </ul>

**2.3.2. Pre-Migration Traumatic Experiences**

Pre-migration factors may be a precursor to mental health problems and also has a significant effect on the refugees' post-migration process (Lindencrona, Ekblad & Hauff, 2008). Prior to leaving their home countries, refugees may have undergone many traumatic life events. Refugees' migration process occurs suddenly, with no or little time to plan or prepare themselves. Traumatic pre-migration events (e.g. the

impact of displacement) involve the death of significant people in their lives, maybe terrorized or witness torture, face with persecution, systematic violence, imprisonment, deprivation of food and shelter, physical maltreatment, sexual abuse and may experience threatened sense of safety which in turn results in living through multiple traumas (Bemak & Chung, 2017). Refugees are uncertain about their destination which affects physical and psychological domains and threaten their safety (Bemak & Chung, 2015).

The traumatic experiences of refugees have a feature of cumulative and interrelated (Mollica, Poole, Son, Murray, & Tor; 1997) and these events are also menace to refugees' sense of empowerment and identity (Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006). Many refugees exposed to highly traumatic experiences, loss of family and interruptions to their daily lives. The research found a dose-response relationship between trauma and level of psychological stress, increasing exposure to torture result in greater the probability of developing mental health difficulties especially for posttraumatic symptoms (Lindencrona et al., 2008). Exposure to torture is found as a significant predictor of PTSD (Silove, Steel, McGorry, Miles & Drobny, 2002; Lindencrona et al., 2008; Bogic et al., 2015). In other words, as the experience of potentially traumatic events and torture increases, the prevalence of PTSD and depression also get higher which is known as a dose-response relationship. Steel et al. (2009) stated that depression is mostly linked with the experience of traumatic events while PTSD's prevalence appears linked with exposure to torture.

The repetitive and multiple exposures to traumatic experiences cause a decrease in resources which make the recovery process harder. The amount of exposure to traumatic events and post-migration stress, post migration conditions account for the rates of psychological trauma (Bogic et al., 2015). A variety of responses are seen as a result of exposure to trauma. Psychosocial responses (e.g., social support, language, worldview, education and so on.) may increase the vulnerability to mental health difficulties or protect the person from psychological stress result from trauma (Schweitzer et al., 2006). Refugees have to deal with problems from the past (e.g., traumatic experiences), present (e.g., living difficulties) and future (e.g., uncertainty)

which can be a source of multiple stressors (Hollifield et al., 2002; Ringold, 2005). Being exposed to traumatic life events and post-migration stressors which include, but not limited to, discrimination, insufficient housing conditions, language barriers, acculturation, unemployment, weak social network due to the forced displacement, refugees become vulnerable to mental health problems majorly post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety (Turrini et al., 2017; Porter & Haslam, 2005; El-Awad et al., 2017; Kira, Shuwiekh, Rice, Al Ibraheem & Aljakoub, 2017; Straiton et al., 2016).

Rumbaut (1991) stated that losing one's family may be a precursor to mental health problems in the resettlement environment (as cited in Tribe, 2002). Refugees become more vulnerable to mental disorders as the number of traumatic experiences or/and level of post-migration stress increases (Bogic et al., 2015). A meta-analysis is conducted by Bogic, Njoku, and Priebe (2015) reviewed 29 articles with a total of 16,010 war-affected refugees. Twenty-one out of twenty-nine studies reported high prevalence rates for depression; twenty studies with a total of 8837 refugees reported similar findings with high prevalence rates of PTSD (Bogic et al., 2015). Another meta-analysis reported similar findings in war-affected refugees and reported changeable prevalence rates for PTSD (PTSD; 9 to 36%), anxiety (4 to 40 %) and depression (5 to 44%) (Turrini et al., 2017). Difference between the results of the studies stems from the characteristics of the sample (e.g., sample size, age, and ethnicity of participants), duration since displacement and the diagnostic method. In their meta-analysis Fazel, Wheeler, and Danesh (2005) reviewed 20 articles with a total of 6743 adult refugees. In their meta-analysis they found that about one in ten refugees has PTSD, one in 20 has major depression and one in 25 has generalized anxiety disorder (Fazel, Wheeler & Danesh, 2005). Refugees seem to be ten times more likely to develop mental health disorder than the native population.

### **2.3.3. Post-Migration Risk Factors**

Post-migration factors also called as resettlement stressors, and pre-resettlement trauma exposure plays a significant role in refugees' mental health symptoms and also the adjustment to a new environment and adaptation processes (Lindencrona et al.,

2008; Philpot & Tipping, 2012). The psychological effects of displacement can be understood via examining the economic, social, and cultural conditions from which refugees are forced to abandon and that they are resettled. In the following section, the resettlement stressors that affect refugees' process of adjustment were provided. Post-migration risk factors which are lack of education and being unemployed, not knowing the receiving country's language, lack of social support, being exposed to acts of discrimination were discussed in detail.

### **2.3.3.1. Education and Employment**

Alienation and social and economic strains (e.g., employment status, financial stress, income, lack of social support, housing conditions, not knowing the language of the host country etc.) are significant for showing symptoms of mental health disorders since they affect psychosocial needs (e.g., existential meaning, identity, roles, attachment) (Bogic et al., 2015; Lindencrona et al., 2008; Philpot & Tipping, 2012). Simich, Hamilton, and Baya (2006) studied the economic hardships and health among 220 Sudanese immigrants in Canada, Ontario. Research results showed that being in a socially disadvantageous position such as receiving low income and having economic difficulties influence refugees' well-being negatively. Individuals who experience economic hardship will also be likely to experience loss of sleep, constant tension, unhappiness and depression. Philpot and Tipping (2012) argued that the level of psycho-social stress increases as the difference between pre- and post-migration resources increases. Greater pre-migration resources in terms of education and economic may cause a greater loss of status which may result in worse psychological outcomes (Porter, & Haslam, 2005).

### **2.3.3.2. Language Barrier**

In the process of resettlement, refugees face several difficulties. Refugees have to adjust to a new culture and language to establish themselves socially. The ability to speak the host country's language is a predictor of successful resettlement and integration in the labor market (Beiser & Hou, 2000). Acquisition of language is seen as a prerequisite for integration and full participation in the receiving society.

Mastering the host country's language ease refugees' resettlement process and decrease the feeling of alienation via providing them access to social and economic resources. Refugees who were able to learn the language were also more comfortable in forming social networks, becoming part of the receiving country, searching for a job or accessing to the resources available to them. In her review, McBrien (2005) studied the needs and obstacles to education for refugees and found that language is a significant factor for acculturation. McBrien (2005) stated that children who learn the language scored lower on depression and higher on self-esteem while the ones who did not acquire the language of the host country feel more isolated and depressed. Ascher (1985) stated that not knowing the language of the host country result in social isolation and increase in resettlement stress. Refugees who fail to master the language, have low socioeconomic status and lack of social support mechanisms are more likely to suffer from alienation than others who have these resources. Researches found that language proficiency, socioeconomic status and social relationships (number of friend and acquaintances in the new country) are negatively correlated with alienation (Nicassio, 1983; Miller, Birman, Zenk, Wang, Sorokin, & Connor, 2009; Vinokurov, Birman, & Trickett, 2000).

#### **2.3.3.3. Social Support**

Receiving social support from other people smooth refugees' adjustment process and decrease the stress they experiencing as a result of resettlement. On the other hand, refugees who do not have social networks that provide them with support face with challenges of resettlement on their own and experience hardships during their process of adjustment to a new country. Simich, Beiser, Stewart, and Mwakarimba (2005) conducted a study of social support for immigrants and refugees in Canada. They aimed to identify newcomers' support seeking ways, to compare immigrants and refugees' social support and support-seeking methods and to determine mechanisms that may strengthen social support. The study conducted between 2000 to 2003 in three cities in three phases. 137 service providers and policymakers in health and immigrant settlement participated in both in-depth and focus group interviews. Research results showed that although they mace many changes in different areas of

their lives, perceived social support plays a significant role in immigrants' lives and health. Refugees and immigrants who have social support experience less stress, feel empowered and integrate into the social life easier than the ones who lack social support. Individuals who lack social support feel lonely and isolated and feel discouraged about seeking employment. Refugees may reject the dominant values and beliefs of the host country or they may not have the resources to feel part of the society which results in alienation from the new society's culture, values, and beliefs. Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, and Reuter's (2006) study with 2360 nationwide adult immigrants aimed to explore the specific role of social support networks in influencing the effects of perceived discrimination on the well-being of immigrants. Study results showed that social support has directly positive effect on refugees' well-being and adjustment process. Active interaction with the host country's network, with friends, family, and relatives have a protective effect on refugees' psychological well-being. Refugees' who form social networks with people from host country that do not discriminate against refugees accept and adapt to the receiving country better.

#### **2.3.3.4. Discrimination**

Discrimination, which is defined as one of the resettlement stressors, and its effect on the mental health of refugees is also studied by the professionals. Montgomery and Foldspang's (2007) study aimed to understand the relationship between discrimination, mental problems and social adaptation in young refugees. Researchers collected data from 131 Middle Eastern refugees residing in Denmark. Study results showed that discrimination, mental problems, and social adaptation are strongly associated with each other. Discrimination is negatively correlated with social adaptation and perceived discrimination associated with mental health difficulties and social adaptation. People who experience acts of discrimination may develop internalizing reactions such as anxiety and depression. Also, previous traumatic experiences which include but not limited to torture and threat are also a precursor to mental health difficulties. Blair's (2000) study aimed to examine the risk factors associated with PTSD and major depression. Research results showed that the number of traumas is positively correlated with PTSD and major depression. Moreover,

current stressors (such as having financial stress) also increase the vulnerability to psychosocial difficulties. Acculturation is another issue that has an effect on refugee mental health. Language difficulties and cultural distance between refugee's own culture and host country's culture have a detrimental effect on an individual's wellbeing (Philpot & Tipping, 2012). The language barrier is seen as one of the important obstacles to build resilience (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012) since not knowing the language caused people to feel powerless and disadvantaged (Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010). Not knowing the language of the host country seems affecting the lives of refugees negatively by aggravating social contact, increase dependence on others and by inhibiting the person from building new social resources and jeopardize the psychosocial wellbeing of refugees even by hampering their employment (Beiser & Hou, 2001). Beiser and Hou (2001) showed that not knowing the language not only increase the vulnerability of employment but also prevent refugees from participating in other life domains and cause risk for isolation and alienation.

To sum, after arriving in a new country, refugees experience resettlement stressors which affect their psychosocial well-being. Researchers who studied resettlement stressors frequently mentioned about four dimensions which are social and economic difficulties, issues of alienation, acts of discrimination and loss of status, being exposed to violence. Refugees who are unemployed or underemployed in the host country may not be able to earn money and maintain their lives. Experiencing economic hardships cause refugees to live in harsh conditions and suffer from mental health difficulties.

#### **2.3.4. At-Risk Subgroups**

Refugees are at risk of developing psychopathologies. Particular groups of refugees are considered at higher risks than the others for developing psychological problems. These groups are (1) older refugees, (2) children and youth and (3) women especially the victims of rape and sexual assault.



#### **2.3.4.1. Older Refugees**

Older refugees, unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) and women are more vulnerable and at higher risk to develop psychological problems (Bemak & Chung, 2017). Older refugees are more disadvantaged than the younger generations in terms of accessing the opportunities that will support their adjustment to a new country. There is a linear relationship between age and psychological wellbeing. Older refugees who are over 65 shows high prevalence for having mental health difficulty which is due to the accumulation of traumatic memories during their lives (Porter, & Haslam, 2005). Older refugees become dependent on others as they grow up. Decreased independence and aging challenges with loss of financial and social support and at the same time experiencing difficulties in adapting to a new country put older refugees in a more disadvantaged position (Atwell, Correa-Velez, & Gifford, 2007). Aging refugees' linguistic skills and memory capacity decline, they lose their social contacts and isolated and also, they may still hope to return their homeland which creates stress on their resettlement process and affect their adjustment to the host country (Aichberger et al., 2010; Tran, 1990). Additionally, refugees who are older have longer histories in their home country and enter the resettlement country at an older age with deep-rooted cultural values which causes more difficulties in adapting to a new place (Bemak, Chung, & Pedersen, 2003). Literature reports that the age of the individuals can be one of the factors that have an effect on refugees' resettlement process. As it was stated above, being older age put individuals at high risk and increase their vulnerability to mental health difficulties. Nicassio and Pate's (1984) study examined the adjustment experiences of 1638 Indochinese refugees resettled in the United States found a relationship between refugees' education and income level and employment status and acculturation and alienation. Nicassio and Pate (1984) asserted that older refugees who were unemployed, had less education and income, experienced more adjustment difficulty in the host country.

#### **2.3.4.2. Children and Youth**

Due to their developmental features (e.g., less than adequate self-coping skills) children and adolescents are defined as vulnerable groups (Bronstein & Montgomery,

2011). In their systematic review, Fazel, Wheeler, and Danesh (2012) found that refugee children have a higher risk for anxiety and fewer coping skills when it compared to the non-displaced children. Children who are unaccompanied minors (URMs) are the ones who were not accompanied by their families during their resettlement process. Therefore, URMs are under greater risks. URMs suffer from loss of their family members, blame their parents for not protecting them from terrifying situations or if their parents are still living, they may feel rejected and abandoned by their parents who are away from them (Chung, 2000). In their longitudinal study Vervliet, Lammertyn, Broekaert, and Derluyn, (2014) followed 103 URMs for 18 months. Vervliet et al. (2014) found that psychological problems of URMs did not change significantly over time and persist for a long time. URMs become subject to discrimination, face social and material stressors, insufficient housing conditions and experience new traumatic events whilst they stay in the host country. Another study conducted by Keles, Friborg, Idsøe, Sirin, and Oppedal, (2016) with 895 URMs found that pre-migration traumatic experiences and exposure to additional acculturation stress affect URMs mental health and increase vulnerability to depression.

#### **2.3.4.3. Women**

Hapke, Schumann, Rumpf, John, and Meyer (2006) stated that although the number of traumatic experiences did not differ among genders through the lifetime, types of traumatic events such as sexual and gender-based violence (e.g., rape and sexual abuse) increase the prevalence of PTSD in women. This seems to be the case for refugee and asylum-seeking women as well. Research results revealed gender differences in refugees' mental health problems. Lack of equal representation in management structures, limited or no access to livelihoods and safety, and the greater likelihood to experience sexual and gender-based violence makes female gender more valuable and at greater risk to develop psychological difficulties. The prevalence of depression is higher in females than in males (Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000). Studies reported that women refugees are at higher risk to develop mental health outcomes

than men refugees due to their premigration traumatic experiences of violence and sexual abuse (Chung, 2000; Porter, & Haslam, 2005).

### **2.3.5. Protective Factors**

Protective factors (safety nets) which work as airbag and increase resilience, provide the individual with the strength to resist and overcome this vulnerability and cope with tremendous life experiences (Kaplan et al., 1996). A person's resilience is determined by the ratio between the protective factors and the presence of threatening life stressors (Van Breda, 2001). Despite the hardship that they experience, refugees may become highly resilient and have high expectations for the future. Then, what factors may foster resilience? Receiving social support, spirituality and cultural practices, use of emotion regulation techniques and being resilient appeared as protective factors in the literature.

#### **2.3.5.1. Spirituality and Culture**

Literature reports some community strengths and resources which increase the resilience of refugees. Spirituality defined as “a way of living which demonstrates essential values, which transmitted through culture, regarding the role of the individual in the world” (Algado, Gregori, & Egan, 1997, p.139). Spirituality and religion are seen as a source of emotional and cognitive support and means of community building and group identity (Gozdziak & Shandy, 2002). Adedoyin et al.'s (2016) systematic review of nine studies aimed to examine the role of religion as a coping mechanism in the mental health of African refugees resettled in the USA. Results of this study indicated that refugees use spirituality to heal the physical body and mind from psychosocial effects of the traumatic experiences. Religiosity is central to the African refugees' value system that shapes their interaction with other people and also their environment. Additionally, Betancourt et al. (2015) stated that despite resettlement challenges religious and culture may have a positive impact on the refugees' functioning. These resources make it possible for refugees to acquire other resources in different areas and thus decrease the risk for mental health problems. Religious and cultural practices order the daily lives of refugees in a way that these

practices help refugees to cope with stress. Religious faith may help an individual to be more optimistic and thus being more social, active and open to new experiences. Lightfoot, Blevins, Lum, and Dube (2016) indicated that religious and cultural practices, the culture of sharing and interconnectedness are assets of Somali refugee communities. Sharing their resources such as food, money, information, experience and frequently visiting each other which is described as interconnectedness seems to promote the well-being of refugees.

### **2.3.5.2. Support**

Protective factors which include but not limited to personal, familial and institutional safety nets are significant for individuals to resist adverse life circumstances (Kaplan et al., 1996). Social support is defined as support available from other individuals or groups and serves as a buffer against the adverse life events (Lin, Ensel, Simeone, & Kuo, 1979). Additionally, consequences of social support on individuals' physical and psychological health, and its protective effects for enhancing resilience are supported by numerous studies (Lin, Ensel, Simeone, & Kuo, 1979; Southwick, Vythilingam, and Charney, 2005). The greater the social support that a person receives, the greater the individual will experience resilience and the lesser psychosocial difficulties. The support that individuals receive may be in form of tangible (financial aid) or intangible (emotional help) (Langford, Bowsher, Maloney, & Lillis, 1997). Researchers defined four attributes of social support which are emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support. *Emotional support* includes offering empathy, love, care, concern, trust, and intimacy with the individuals (Slevin, Nichols, Downer, Wilson, Lister, & Arnott, et al., 1996). It is sending the message that regardless of what the person does, he/she is valued and loved as an individual (Janicki-Deverts, & Cohen, 2011; Langford et al. 1997; Slevin et al., 1996). *Instrumental support* also known as tangible support is providing individuals with financial aid, economic resources and services (Janicki-Deverts, & Cohen, 2011; Langford et al. 1997). The provision of tangible support is in a more concrete way of helping others. *Informational support* is the provision of information to individuals in form of guidance or useful information that helps the individuals to solve their problems (Janicki-Deverts, & Cohen, 2011;

Langford et al. 1997). *Appraisal support* is the provision of information in forms of feedbacks that will be useful for the individual's self-evaluation (Glanz, Rimer, & Viswanath, 2008; Langford et al. 1997).

Studies show that social support is significant in maintaining well-being in the presence of psychosocial risks. In their reviews, Ozbay, Fitterling, Charney, and Southwick (2008) indicated that poor social support had detrimental effects on an individual's health. Researches conducted with animals especially monkeys showed that social isolation and separation causes biological changes in their bodies (such as an increase in heart rates and blood pressure etc.) and therefore increase the risk of cardiac diseases. Also, studies conducted with adults asserted that there is a negative correlation between the levels of social support and mortality and morbidity associated with medical diseases (Ozbay et al., 2008). As the level of social support increases, the mortality and morbidity rates decreased. In a study conducted with 1632 Vietnam veterans aimed to examine the relationships between war-zone stressors, resilience and recovery factors, and PTSD symptoms. King, King, Fairbank, Keane, and Adams (1998) found that individuals who score high in hardiness item show fewer PTSD symptoms than the other ones who scored higher. Also, it is found that people who score high in hardiness are better at forming large social support network than persons low in hardiness. High and functional social support mechanisms seen as one of the resilience factors that contribute to general wellbeing (King et al., 1998).

#### **2.3.5.3. Personal Factors**

Since the traumatic experiences are also highly emotional, it has been said that the way an individual evaluates an event affects the type of emotional reactions and thus, a person's ability to regulate his/her emotions may be significant for determining resilience. (Lazarus, 2006). Appraisal theories suggest that way people appraise what is happening in their lives creates a variety of emotions (Troy and Mauss, 2011). Attention control (AC) and cognitive reappraisal (CR) are mentioned as two effective strategies of cognitive emotion regulation (Ochsner & Gross, 2005). Controlling attention means focusing on the relevant emotions that facilitate emotion-regulation and ignore the ones that are irrelevant or that may hinder the emotion regulation

process (Ochsner & Gross, 2005; Troy and Mauss, 2011). Cognitive reappraisal involves rethinking and reinterpreting the meaning of an event to change the emotional response of it (Ochsner & Gross, 2005).

In their studies, Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) found there is a positive relationship between having high abilities to rebound from stressful events and the time it takes to return to the baseline level. A resilient individual with successful emotion regulation and positive emotions seem to recover quickly since positive emotions are observed to be helpful in emotion regulation. Thus, resilient individuals find the opportunity to evaluate other emotion regulation techniques (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004). Also, Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) found that individuals who are defined as high-resilient cognitively appraised stressful events as less threatening. Troy, Wilhelm, Shallcross, and Mauss (2010) tested whether CR would act as a moderator between cumulative stress and depressive symptoms. Researchers found that women with high CR show fewer depressive symptoms and CR acted as a moderator between stress and depression. Individuals with high CR can still realize the stress in the negative events and can be realistic about the detrimental effects of this stress in their lives, but still can be able to decrease their negative responses and emotions to this event (Troy et al., 2010). Creating fewer negative emotions helps people who are high in CR to decrease the amount of stress they are experiencing (Troy et al., 2010). Tribe (2002) stated that knowing they reached a safe place and no longer being under threat may also provide refugees with a sense of peace. Nickerson et al., (2017) studied the efficacy of cognitive reappraisal in highly traumatized refugees. Research results showed that engaging with CR and reducing emotion suppression increases the well-being of refugees who experience a high level of PTSD. Refugees who use cognitive and emotional regulation strategies such as acceptance, putting into perspective and positive refocusing play mediator role between traumatic experience and post-traumatic stress (Hussain & Bhushan, 2011).

Troy, Shallcross, and Mauss (2013) measured CR, the severity of recent life stressors, controllability of stress and depression level in 170 participants to test whether reappraisals are adaptive or maladaptive when stressors are controllable and

uncontrollable. Results of the study show that reappraisals may be useful in some contexts but harmful in another. When the stress is uncontrollable, when the only way is to regulate the self, using CR is helpful and associated with lower depression levels (Troy et al., 2013). However, when the stressors are controllable, when there is a chance to change the situation, reappraisals were associated with higher depression levels. In such situations, the negative emotions which can motivate people to act for the solutions of the problem were decreased with the use of CR and therefore, negative outcomes may occur (Troy et al., 2013). From these findings, it can be understood that the context that emotion-regulation strategies are used is significant in terms of contributing or risking resilience. The role of positive coping strategies in fostering individuals' resilience is documented well in a number of studies. In a study conducted with 297 adolescents aimed to investigate the differences between well-adjusted, resilient and vulnerable people showed that resilient ones had higher scores on problem-solving coping strategies than the other two groups (Dumont, M., & Provost, M. A., 1999).

#### **2.3.5.4. A Road to Resilience**

A considerable number of refugees does not develop long-lasting psychological consequences. Recognition of this fact is significant for understanding the factors that enhance well-being. Across their lifespan, individuals are exposed to at least one traumatic experience (such as losses, deaths, serious illness and so on.) which may possibly result in developing maladaptive outcomes. However, despite being exposed to abnormal events or traumatic experiences, not all individuals develop psychosocial problems following trauma. It is recognized that people can be also resilient to crises, traumas and life adversities and achieve successful adaptation. While some people deal with acute stress that they are unable to recover, others recover in a shorter period of time and continue to their lives in a way that they used to (Bonanno, 2004).

After being exposed to traumatic life events, individuals can find ways to cope with the adverse effects of traumas and deal with the accompanying risk factors which make the person feeling stronger and more resilient. The term "resilience" comes from the Latin word "resilire" means to recoil. The Collins Dictionary (n.d.) defines

resilience as the ability to recover from the adverse conditions. Resilience is "the capacity to maintain competent functioning in the face of major life stressors" which lead to individual vulnerability (Kaplan, Turner, Norman, & Stillson, 1996, p. 158; Van Breda, 2001).

Bonanno (2004) differentiated resilience from recovery and stated that recovery is:

A trajectory in which normal functioning temporarily gives way to a threshold or subthreshold psychopathology (e.g., symptoms of depression or posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD]), usually for a period of at least several months, and then gradually returns to pre-event levels. (p. 20)

The recovery of individuals from adverse life events may be rapid or it may take a maximum of one or two years. On the other hand, resilience is defined as "the ability to maintain a stable equilibrium" (Bonanno, 2004, p.20). Resilience includes accumulated skills and knowledge which helps the people to overcome adversities and thus function positively. While recovering individuals experience subthreshold levels of symptoms, resilient individuals may show "transient perturbations" in their normal functioning; however, as time goes, they equilibrate and shows healthy functioning (Bonanno, 2004, p.21).

American Psychological Association (APA) (2010) defined resilience as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress". Within the definitions provided above two significant components can be seen: (1) experiencing hazardous or severe adversity and threat; and (2) being able to achieve positive adaptation despite the tremendous life stressors on person's developmental process (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). In the literature of psychology, resilience described three phenomena: (1) successful adaptation despite high-risks, (2) showing long-term competency under dangerous situations, and (3) recovery from trauma (Masten et al., 1990). Risks are the factors that increase the vulnerability of individuals and threaten their well-being. Refugees are exposed to highly stressful situations both in their home country and in the host country. Refugees who are exposed to high-risk situations such as loss of loved ones, torture, persecution, violence and unemployment might show resilience.



In their systematic review, Reed, Fazel, Jones, Panter-Brick, & Stein (2012) asserted that despite cumulative traumatic exposure which is supposed to create adverse outcomes in a person's life, refugee children who receive social support show lower level of mental health disturbance.

Taormina (2015) defined four dimensions of resilience which are determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability. Determination is defined as strong will that the individual has to succeed. This dimension is the cognitive and conscious part of personal resilience. Endurance means to struggle against the severe conditions and not giving up. This dimension requires both cognitive and physical parts. Adaptability is adjusting to the conditions, being resourceful and cope with adverse life experiences. To adopt a new situation, the person needs to use more conscious effort (changing one's thoughts and behaviors) than physical. Lastly, Taormina (2015) defines recuperability as the individual's ability to recover from severe life stressors both physically and cognitively. This dimension includes both cognitive and physical efforts.

Resilience to traumatic experiences is common and most of the individuals do not show symptoms of pathology and they exhibit healthy adjustment (Bonanno, 2004). Bonanno (2004) defined four factors that promote resilience: (1) Hardiness, (2) Self-Enhancement, (3) Repressive Coping, and (4) Positive Emotion and Laughter. Personality hardiness help individuals to maintain equilibrium under extremely stressful situations. Bonanno's (2004) conceptualization of personality hardiness includes commitment, control, and challenge. Resilient individuals are committed to finding a meaningful aim in life, believe that they can control and influence their environment and do not perceive the challenges as a threat but rather as believe that they will grow from these challenges. King, King, Fairbank, Keane, and Adams's (1998) study aimed to examine relationships among several war-zone stressors, postwar variables, Resilience-recovery factors, and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms in a national sample of 1,632 Vietnam veterans found that the intrapersonal resource of hardiness has a significant mediator effect or role with social support. Another study aimed to examine the relationships between pre-trauma risk factors,

war zone stressors, post-trauma resiliency-recovery variables and PTSD in a national sample of 432 female and 1,200 male veterans. Study results showed that hardiness and social support were protective variables and buffer the negative effects of PTSD (King, King, Foy, Keane, & Fairbank, 1999). Hardy individuals were able to use active coping and social support better than other individuals.

The second dimension which linked to resilience is self-enhancement is defined as having a realistic image in favor of the self and accept one's personal limitation (Bonanno, 2004). Bonanno, Rennieke, and Dekel (2005) studied self-enhancing bias as a predictor of adjustment among individuals in or near the World Trade Center during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in a sample of 52 participants age from 23 to 59 years and examined whether individuals who use unrealistic self-serving biases show resilience or other adaptive outcomes. Study results indicated that self-enhancers have obvious benefits such as they survive psychologically easier after the traumatic experience. The third dimension that may be associated with resilience is repressive coping. Repressive copers also can be resilient individuals after the loss and trauma that they experienced. Repressive copers are defined as the individuals who tend to repress and avoid unpleasant thoughts and emotions (Bonanno, 2004). In some cases, emotional dissociation may be associated with maladjustment and long-term mental health difficulties but in another it also fosters adaptation. Bonanno and Field's (2001) study of bereavement indicated that individuals who use repressive coping show little grief and distress during five years of bereavement.

Lastly, individuals who show resilience may also use positive emotion and laughter (Bonanno, 2004). Use of positive emotions and laughter help to quit negative emotions and thus, decrease the stress of traumatic events. Keltner and Bonanno's (1997) study results, that hypothesized laughter during bereavement relate with dissociation from psychological distress and enhance social relations, indicated that laughter is linked with dissociation from one's feelings, increased relationship of adjustment. Laughers were better adjusted, healthier, less frustrated and more amused which help them to adjust better in face of adverse events.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHOD**

This chapter presents the design of the study, participants, data collection and data analysis. Overall research methodology is provided in the design section, the interview protocol introduced in the instrument section, the sampling section involves how the participants are selected and interviewed. Finally, the data analysis section is about how the data were analyzed.

#### **3.1. Design**

This study was designed as a qualitative, exploratory research to investigate the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey via utilizing the community-based participatory research (CBPR). Face to face interviews was used in different places (participants' homes, outside of their homes, etc.). The literature was reviewed according to the research topic and the interview questions were developed with the cooperation of people both from the Syrian community and the experts who work in the humanitarian field particularly with Syrian refugees. Seven Syrian refugees, with no specific marital status, were interviewed. The inclusion criteria were being over 18 years old and arriving to Turkey after the civil war in Syria began. Community representatives which were Refugee Community Organizations (RCO) and Community Advisory Board (CAB) provided guidance on recruitment and retention strategies for reaching the participants. Participants were selected within the consultation of CAB and RCO.

CBPR was beneficial in selecting participants for some reasons. First, the Syrian community had a tight connection with each other and the participants were hesitant to speak about the issues that they encountered during the war. The connection was first established with the guidance of CAB and RCO that know the community well and have contacts with Syrians. Thus, the rapport between the participants and the researchers was formed smoothly.

The interviews were administered in Arabic either by the researcher herself or with the assistance of community researchers (CRs). Interviews translated into Turkish concurrently through the transcription procedure by the researcher and later translated into English for the study. During the interviews, voice recording was taken for the later transcription. Sometimes, also notes were taken simultaneously.

The analysis of the transcribed data was completed with Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) programme, Atlas.ti. for Mac. The following sections present comprehensive information regarding the methodology.

### **3.1.1. Instrument: Interview Protocol**

An interview guide was developed with inputs from CAB and RCO and tested in a refugee from the Syrian community. The instrument was designed to ask questions about four main areas of participants' lives about their migration process; (1) Past experiences, (2) Present experiences in Turkey, (3) Questions about self and (4) Questions about their future plan. Specifically, the past experiences were asked to get information about the traumas and hardships that refugees underwent throughout the civil war and during their asylum-seeking process. Next, the present experiences were about the resettlement process of refugees in terms of adaptation to a new country, challenges they encounter, financial and psychological difficulties and support mechanisms. Questions about self attempted to discover the things that facilitated the adaptation process and the things that hindered the process. Ultimately, the participants were asked to report on their future plans and how they aim to fulfill their wishes.

After the permission of the Middle East Technical University (METU), Human Subjects Ethics Committee (HSEC) was obtained, participants of the sample participated in semi-structured interviews carried either by trained CRs by the supervision of the researcher or by the researcher. Refugees were visited, called by phone and the purpose, method and the procedure of the study were explained to them.

Complete information about the research was given to the participants. The participants were informed that the participation in the study is voluntary and they can withdraw from the study if they wanted to do so. The participants were also assured about the confidentiality and anonymity of their participation. They were apprised that the interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher. It was guaranteed that all the records will be destroyed right after the thesis was handled. After all the information of the study was shared, their collaboration was asked, and their informed consents were obtained. Participants were asked for a suitable place and a convenient time for the interview. Two chose to be interviewed in their own home, three at the migration center and two preferred to meet in a café.

All interviews conducted by the researcher and trained CRs and lasted about one hour. Demographic part of the interviews lasted about 10 min. and the rest of the interviews took approximately 50 min. to complete. All the interviews were audio recorded. Sometimes, detailed notes were taken during the interview. The notes and interviews were deidentified and transcribed in Turkish for data analysis. Participants were first asked general questions about their migration process. The researchers were not strict in following the sequence of the interview guide. The course of the interview was guided by the questions and it was not dictated to follow the interview guide. When there was an interesting experience opened up by the participants, probes were used to assist the participants to tell more about their experiences. Probes such as "Can you tell me more about this?", "What exactly do you mean by telling this?", "How did you feel at that moment?", and "Is there any example that you can give me about this?" were used. The silences were allowed during the interviews since they allow the interviewees to think and recall their thoughts and feelings in relation to the questions.

Sometimes the interviewees could not understand the questions and tried to answer the questions in a way they understood it. The interviewer asked the questions again in different words to make it clear for the interviewees. It is noteworthy to state that it was advantageous to know the native language and conduct the interviews in the refugees' native language. The expressions and terms that they used understood easily and during the transcription process, the translation of the interview tried to be done via obtaining the best word both in Turkish and English that explains the participants' experiences. Hence, the misunderstanding caused by the language difference between the researcher and participants was minimized.

### **3.1.2. Participants**

The study conducted under the framework of a community-based participatory research approach (CBPR). Due to the nature of the CBPR approach, interview protocol created in collaboration with the community advisory board (CAB) and refugee community organizations (RCO). Because of dense social networks in the Syrian community, it was challenging to reach participants for the study unless they were known to each other. CAB and RCO guided the researcher in the most practical way to reach the participants.

A partnership between the Syrian community and the researcher formed via CBPR. Local Syrian community and other organizations that currently serve Syrian refugees reached to inform them about the research and to request their assistance with recruitment efforts. Adult participants from the community recruited for the study. Reaching the male participants was easier than reaching the females. Men refugees were working outside and culturally they were responsible for the family's safety. Therefore, whenever a woman was called, a man responded and after receiving the permission of him, the female participant was contacted and asked for her voluntary participation to the study. Furthermore, working in a refugee center helped the researcher to gain the confidence of the refugees.

There was a total of seven Syrian refugees in this qualitative study. Participants of this study composed of three males and four females; their ages were above 18 years old,

with no specific marital and socioeconomic status and currently live in Ankara, Turkey. The participants required to be from those who come to Turkey in 2011, after the Syrian war started. Those who come to Turkey before the war were excluded.

The descriptives were presented below in Table 2. All of the participants (3 males, 4 females) were above 18, their ages ranged between 20-33, with a mean age of 24.14; all of them were educated and above primary school level. Three of the participants were single and four of them were married. Especially females reported that they married between 14-17 ages. Three of the participants (1 male, 2 female) were not working and four of them (2 male, 2 female) were working in different areas of business life (interpreter, tailor, pastry cook, etc.). Participants' length of time in Turkey ranged from a minimum of one year to a maximum of six years in Turkey, with a mean duration of 3.2 years. All but one participant migrated from Halep and one of them from Hama. Six of the refugees were living with their families while one of them was residing with friends in Turkey.

Table 2

*Summary of demographic information of participants interviewed*

Category Name	Groups	No. of participants	Percentage of participants
Age	20-25	5	71.4
	26-31	1	14.3
	32-33	1	14.3
Gender	Male	3	42.9
	Female	4	57.1
Marital Status	Married	4	71.4

Table 2 (cont'd)

*Summary of demographic information of participants interviewed*

Category Name	Groups	No. of participants	Percentage of participants
	Single	3	28.6
Number of children	No children	3	42.86
	Only child	1	14.29
	Two children	3	42.86
Education Level	Primary School	2	28.6
	High School	5	71.4
Occupation	Working	3	42.9
	Not Working	4	57.1
Number of Years in Turkey	1- 2 years	2	28.6
	3- 4 years	4	57.1
	5- 6 years	1	14.3
Region	Halep	6	85.7
	Hama	1	14.3
The Persons They Live With	Family	6	85.7
	Friends	1	14.3



The interviews took approximately 50 minutes to one and half hours to complete. All the interviews were face-to-face interviews. Each interview was sound recorded, transcribed and prepared for the analysis. The documents for each refugee included the reflection of the interviewer.

### **3.1.2.1. Detailed Description of The Participants**

Based on the observations, each interviewer had his/her own page as it is reported in this section for the introduction of participants. To protect the anonymity of the individuals, some information was not added under this subsection. All the names used here are nicknames given to the interviewees by the interviewer.

#### **PART ID #1: ZEYNEP**

Zeynep was married, a housewife in her late 20s. She had 2 children, one child of age 1.5 and the other 3. She lost 2 of her children after she gave birth. She reported more than one-time displacement during the war and mostly fearful memories of the experiences that she lived through. She lost her relatives and left her family members behind after coming to Turkey which makes her feel bad. She was feeling sadness and loneliness because of not having friends or any family member that she could share something with. In Syrian culture, a woman was prohibited from going outside without the permission of her husband and even if her husband agrees, she had to take a male with her for protection. Therefore, she reported that she spent most of her time at home among four walls. Zeynep seemed very concerned about her husband's work issues. She reported increased emotionality especially when she had problems with one of the family members. Change in their socio-economic status after coming to Turkey seemed affecting her too much. She was ok with the voice recording and shared her feelings and experiences openheartedly.

#### **PART ID #2: MUHAMMED**

Muhammed, in his early 30s, was a married high school graduate interpreter, had 2 children. At the time of the interview, one of them was 1.5 years old and the other one

was 7 months. Muhammed seemed to cope well with the traumatic experiences that he was exposed. He faced with the risk of death and arrestment more than one time, lost his family member and relatives. He was living with his family members in Turkey and he got too much support from them that makes him feel better and strong. He had expectations for the future and was working hard to reach his expectations. He had the guilt of leaving his loved ones behind in Syria, still wanted to help them and sometimes he had a strong will to return and visit the grave of his family members. He was thanking Allah too much and praying to reach the socioeconomic status he lost in Syria. The increased burden and responsibility made him feel bad most of the time; however, he seemed to manage these thoughts effectively. Muhammed had some concerns about the risks of the voice record. After he was assured about his privacy, he accepted the interview request.

#### PART ID #3: HATİCE

Hatice, in her early 20s, was a primary school graduate, a married housewife with two children. One of her children was approximately 2 years and the other one was 3 years old. She was 7 months pregnant at the time of the interview and was expecting her 3<sup>rd</sup> baby. She married young at her 16s and bare too much responsibility at her young age. She was having neither someone from her family nor any close friends in Turkey which were causing her to feel lonely and more pessimistic most of the time. She seemed to have difficulties in carrying all the responsibility and also uncomfortable in Turkey. Her family's financial condition was not well, and they had debts at that time. She was concerned too much with the idea that how she is going to meet her baby's and kids needs. Hatice spent most of her time at home. Even though she was for 3 years in Turkey, she was not knowing any Turkish word. Therefore, she reported that she has difficulties in going outside on her own. Hatice was willing to share her experiences.

#### PART ID #4: HÜSEYİN

In his early 20s, Hüseyin was single, high school graduate living with his friends in Turkey. Hüseyin was almost for 2 years in Turkey and was yearning for the times he

was living in Syria. He was desiring to complete his education in Turkey; however, was having some difficulties in continuing. The economic situation and language difficulties were two of the major obstacles that he reported. Living far from his family without any assistance come from someone seemed affecting him negatively. Following the war, he had to work and leave his education, therefore the increased responsibility was making him feel distressed about the happenings. He found most of the interview questions weird, smiled when he was answering the questions and mostly reported on the challenges that he was going through. Notwithstanding, Hüseyin seemed to have a meaning in life and works to reach to it. He was working hard, learning Turkish and enduring the pain, leaning on his friends to receive their support. Hüseyin shared his experiences and feelings sincerely.

#### PART ID #5: MELEK

Melek, in her early 20s, was engaged, high school graduate and maintaining her university in Turkey while at the same time was working to pay for herself. She was speaking Turkish well, seemed to adjust well to the country and felt she was accepted. She reported that she grew much stronger than before and now feels that she could accomplish everything she wants. She was struggling to fulfill her dreams and seemed to cope well with the difficulties that she was facing. She was living with her family in Turkey and getting their support in her life. Yet, she reported that she needs close friends since she cannot share too much with her mother because of the generation difference. She had hopes for the future and was working hard to accomplish these wishes. She considered herself better in Turkey and stated that the rights granted to women in Turkey made her stronger. Mastering the language and interacting with the local people supported her during her adjustment process. She immediately accepted the interview request.

#### Part ID #6: AHMET

Ahmet was single, not working in his early 20s and graduated from high school. He was living with his family and did not have friends that he can trust. After coming to a new country, he immediately started to get medication for his skin cancer. After the

things that he witnessed and underwent, he seemed quite strong and maturer than his age. He was still feeling the impacts of traumas as nightmares but at the same time was attempting to cope with them. At the time of the interview, he has been here for 1 year in Turkey and had the sorrow of living behind his loved ones. He reported an increased sense of safety after arriving in Turkey. His family seemed to have the greatest impact on his life in terms of the support and care that they were providing. He was willing to share his experience.

PART ID #7: EMİNE

In her early 20s, Emine was married women, graduated from secondary school and married at her 16s. She had one child of approximately 6 years old. She was living with her family in Turkey and working too. She had a busy working schedule, tried to do more than one job for a living. She was speaking Turkish well, had friends that were supporting her master the language. She was feeling that she belongs to Turkey. She stated that she grew stronger and felt better after arriving in Turkey. She had dreams for herself and her son; she was wanting to continue her life here in Turkey with her son and not returning to Syria. Emine was willing to share her experience with the interviewer.

### **3.1.3. Data Collection**

This research was conducted under the framework of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). To reach the goal CBPR was used to comprise a partnership between Syria community and the researcher. CBPR is an orientation achieving to create equitable partnerships between researchers and community members. CBPR is based on co-learning and empowerment through which the needs and priorities (De Kock et al., 2017), as well as the strengths/ resources of communities, can be identified. CBPR taps into cultural complexities and benefits to translate research into action and practice (Vaughn, Jacquez, Lindquist, Parsons, & Melink, 2016).

*Implementing CBPR:* In order to establish a joint partnership with the Syrian refugees in Turkey, in addition to academic researchers, one more partner was identified:

- 1) *Community Advisory Board (CAB)*: CAB consisted of members who were familiar with the Syrian population, experts from organizations working with refugees and mental health professionals.
- 2) *Refugee Community Organizations (RCO)*: The existing community organizations operating in Turkey was contacted to seek partnership.

CAB and RCO helped to outline the interview protocol, to reach participants and to verify the needs of the Syrians.

- 3) *Community Researchers (CRs)*: CRs was trained in scientific research methods and how to administer interviews. Their responsibilities were (1) identifying the research participants and (2) conducting the interviews. Therefore, CRs were functional in both Turkish and Arabic and had good social skills and enough education level.

After the literature review was completed, the research questions were defined, and the interview protocol was prepared with the help of partners defined in CBPR. Then, for the ethics committee permission, the research project was presented to METU-UEAM. The permission presented in Appendix A was given to be valid between May 11<sup>th</sup> and December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The data collection procedure had started on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and finished on July 15<sup>th</sup> of the same year.

Since the focus of the interview was about Syrian refugees' resettlement experiences, the pre, during and post-migration experiences were studied, and the focus was on the mentioned processes. The interview protocol was prepared with the help of community partners, which also helped the researcher to conduct detailed interviews about the participants' lives, to provide answers about the migration process and adjustment experiences. Questions that may cause discomfort or mistrust are reviewed carefully with the CRs, CAB, and RCO.

The pilot interview was made with a refugee, who fits into the category and well known to the researcher. After the pilot interview, the participant asked to give feedback about the questions. Some of the questions reviewed according to the

feedback and the participant again asked for his feedback. CRs also reviewed and gave feedback about the questions thus the questions were aimed to be put in a format to be both gender and culture-sensitive.

CAB and RCO aided the researcher to reach the participants who fulfill the criteria set by for this study. Since the focus of the study was to set a general picture of the overall adjustment of Syrian refugees, Syrian adult refugees who came to Turkey after the Syrian war began were selected for the interview. Moreover, since this thesis topic was required to build rapport and trust, and enter a closed group, having someone that reach the participants, introduce the researcher and assure the participants about the confidentiality put refugees at ease about interviewing and sharing their feelings and experiences.

Before beginning the interview, the participants are assured about the issues of confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation. However, despite being anonymous and despite assuring the confidentiality, for the possibility that some participants still may not feel comfortable in continuing to the interview due to the nature of some questions, the participants were told, if such cases happen, they have the right to quit at any time or choose not to answer the question that causes discomfort to them. The study was approved by the ethnic community of the author's university and written informed consent was obtained from participants. A copy of the informed consent including the contact information of the researcher and debriefing form of the study was given to the participants. All the voice recordings were taken with the consent of the participants and the interview time and date were selected by the participants.

During the interviews, the participants informed about the emotional aspects of the questions. The questions were monitored before; however, because of the sensitivity of the issue, some questions might trigger the traumatic experiences of the participants and made them feel bad about the things happened. During the interviews, two of the participants got too much emotional and cannot control their feelings well, the interviewer took breaks and waited for the participants to be ready. At the end of the interviews, two of these participants referred to the psychologists or organizations

working with refugees, that was thought to be helpful in managing their psychosocial difficulties.

To avoid barriers to participation and misunderstanding which are linked to language and culture, all the interviews were conducted in Arabic by a bilingual researcher speaking Arabic, English and Turkish and CRs. Interviews conducted in a language that is comfortable for the participants. The whole data is simultaneously translated from Arabic to Turkish during transcription and the anonymity of the participants was assured by the interviewer.

### **3.1.3.1. Researcher Reflexivity**

The researcher needed to be aware of some issues during the research process. First, the reason for choosing these specific research questions needed to be clarified. As a researcher, my own life experiences were full of effort to adjust to a new place, language and culture as well. During my lifetime, we moved from a different country to a village in Turkey then to a city and I personally moved to different cities within the country. In each of these periods, I developed some tactics and learned how to adjust to a new environment with experiencing hardships during that process of adjustment. At first, it was difficult and stressful period for me to understand what is going on around; however, as times went on I master the environment, form new relationships that helped me to cope with the resettlement stress and did not develop any depressive symptoms.

As a bilingual psychological counselor speaking Arabic and Turkish, I was able to communicate with my participants in their mother tongue and gaining deeper insight into their experiences. Although I got help from CRs, it was useful and significant for me to understand what my participants told us in their native language. Also, I found the opportunities of working with Syrian refugees at different ages approximately for two years. For the first year of my work experience, I was conducting interviews with the vulnerable group of refugees to understand their resettlement stressors. On my second work experience which lasts for one year, I was conducting psychological counseling with refugees. Refugees I interviewed and consulted were from different

regions of Syria, had different education levels and also differ in terms of experiences which provided me with the information about how to communicate and approach to refugees at different ages, gender, education level and from different regions. After entering a new country, refugees need time to get used to their new environment, explore their resources and strengths to build up things on them. During my work experience in refugee service as a psychosocial support specialist, refugees were referred to me because of their traumatic experiences. However, refugees had little understanding about why they need a psychosocial support specialist and getting a psychosocial help was not their primary need, but they agreed to referrals. Another specialist seems to assume that refugees had traumatic experiences in their lives which should be affecting their mental health negatively.

My previous work experience with refugees showed me that after they arrived at a new country, refugees confused by what will going to happen to them, was sad by leaving too much behind, feared by the unknown and also became happy by arriving in a safe place. Working with refugees provided me with the insight that refugees are strong enough to continue their lives even after the trauma and torture they are exposed to and they are resourceful. This understanding helped to change my mind about refugees and seeing them as resourceful, strong and resilient individuals. Approximately two years of work experience provided me with insight into the issue; however; I also became curious to understand their overall adjustment process in detail.

### **3.2. Analysis**

Under this section, preparation of the interviews for the analysis through qualitative data analysis (QDA) program will be presented in detail. The content analysis of the interviews was completed through a qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti. for mac.



### **3.2.1. Qualitative Data Analysis**

An electronic written format for each participant was prepared via using the interview notes and voice records. Qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti. was used to code the interviews. To make the research truly community based and enhance the credibility of the analysis, community partners were involved in the analysis by providing feedback on the completed analysis. The content analysis was done by the academic researchers and sent to the community partners for member checking. All transcripts were read carefully to examine the patterns, themes, and meanings. Each of the significant pieces emerged from the texts were coded to find out more about the life experiences of the refugees in the host country. The stages used throughout the analysis were as follows: Interviews were transcribed and read more than one time to discover the key issues in them. To transform these key issues into more specific themes, each transcript was read again. Common themes between transcripts were identified. Research findings were checked and confirmed by two of the research participants who were able to speak well and understand both Turkish and Arabic. Thus, the researcher was able to sure that the collected data interpreted appropriately. Also, another co-coder provided with the codes and codebook to analyze the project individually. Emergent themes were identified. In the result section, the most striking and best summarizing quotations provided.

To reduce the researcher bias and enhance credibility, the interpretations of the data was sent to two of the participants for member checking, to check whether the codes are consistent with their experience. Thus, interpretive accuracy tried to be achieved and validity and reliability increased. Furthermore, a reflective journal is kept noting the researcher's thoughts and interpretations before the data analyzed. Instrument reliability of the project is checked via reviewing the participants' responses throughout to the interview to find response uniformity. Moreover, a copy of the interview data and codes were sent to an independent researcher to overcome researcher bias. Trustworthiness of the results was enhanced through triangulation with qualitative data collected through different sources. Individual interviews, observation, and more than one informant were used for triangulating the data.

Participants' experiences were verified against others. Statements from the interviews were used to form connections between the codes and the data which also helped to increase the trustworthiness and credibility of the results.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

In this section, findings from the interviews were presented in four main sections with sub-sections below each of them: (1) Immigration Experiences of Syrians, (2) Resettlement Experiences of Syrians, (3) Future for Syrians in Turkey, and (4) Suggestions from Syrians. Under each section, codes, nodes, and quotations will be presented for a clearer picture. The flow of the result section is as provided in Figure 1- Flowchart of the Result

#### **4.1. Immigration Experiences of Syrians**

Under this section, Syrian refugees' pre-migration experiences were provided under two sub-sections: (1) Decision to Leave and (2) Flight to Turkey. Refugees were firstly asked for how long they have been in Turkey. Interviewees' length of time in Turkey ranged from a minimum of 1 year to a maximum of 6 years in Turkey, with a mean duration of 3.2 years. Syrian refugees asked to mention about their past experiences of war in general. All of them reported traumatic experiences which include sub-themes of the death of their loved ones, destruction of their homes, terrorized or witnessed torture, deprivation of their fundamental rights, lack of water, electricity, worsened financial conditions and restriction of access to staple foods.

Refugees were also asked to mention about their migration experiences and about the factors that affect their decision to migrate. How refugees decide to migrate, and which factors affect their decisions were elaborated under "Decision to Leave"

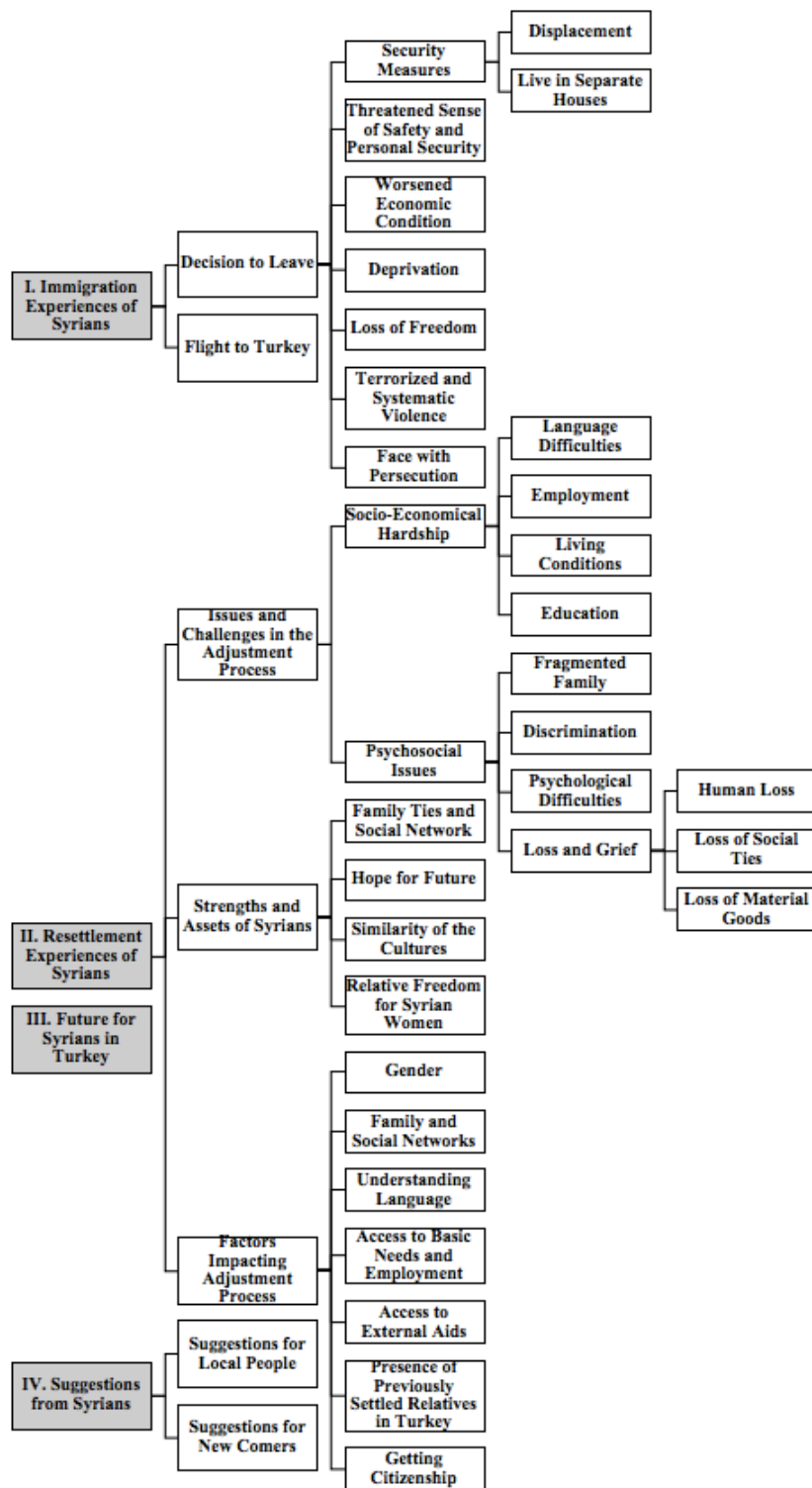


Figure 1: Flowchart of the Result

section, and their migration experiences of flight process were elaborated under "Flight to Turkey" section in detail. Immigration experiences of refugees were also presented in Figure 2- Immigration Experiences of Syrians

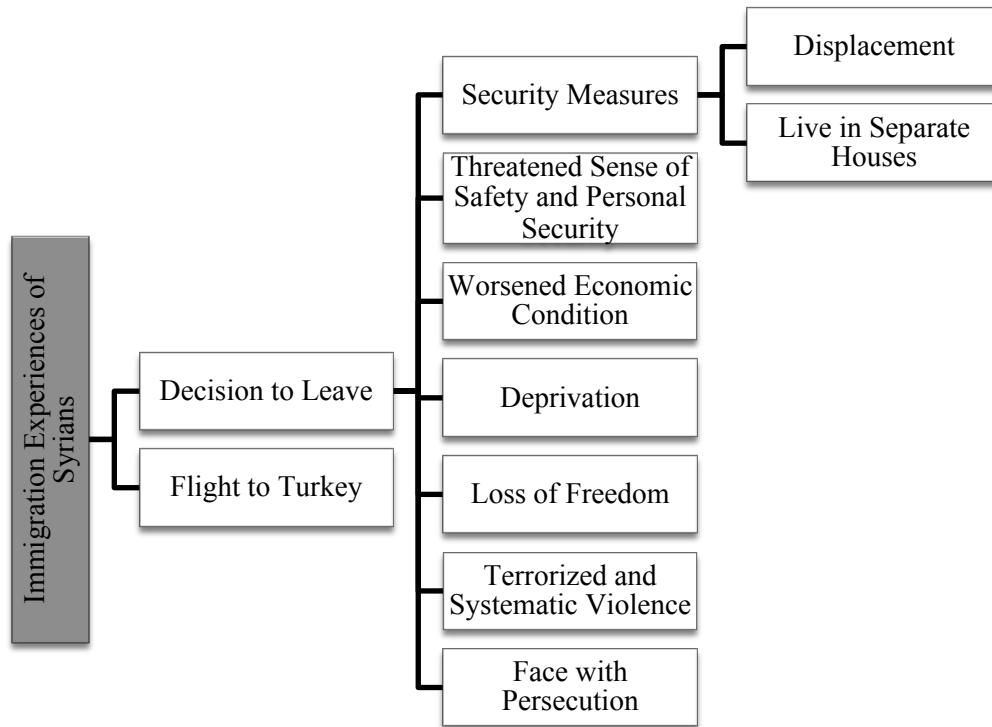


Figure 2: Immigration Experiences of Syrians

#### 4.1.1. Decision to Leave

Participants mentioned their experiences during the first year of the war. Before deciding to migrate to unknown destinations refugees attempted to keep themselves secure and safe via taking some security precautions such as moving to safe areas in Syria or males were living in separate houses from females to protect females and children and save time for females to run from the attacks. Being displaced more than one time, threatened the sense of safety, worsened economic conditions, limitation of access to staple foods, electricity, and water, restriction of their freedom, and torture and systematic violence forced refugees to flee their motherland.

Interviewees stated that before deciding to migrate, they immigrated to different regions in Syria where they believe to be safe with their family members up until they found nowhere to go but to fly their country. *Displacement* from their homes to other places within their homeland is one of the determinants that influence refugees to take a decision to leave their country. All of the participants reported that they displaced more than one time within the borders of their own country before they migrate to Turkey:

To tell you the truth, we were living in a village in Aleppo. Assad troops had started attacking the area that we were in. We moved to another region. Later, Assad troops began bombing the area we were living in. We traveled to Jarabulus with my family. I worked there for a while. ISIS seized control of this region. Then, I came to Turkey. Of course, life was very tough for us. All of the villages were bombed.

We lived in Damascus for a while. But, the war was continuing. And we were constantly moving from one place to another. It was very difficult.

Not all but one of the interviewees reported that they were separated from their family members for a while to stay safe and to protect themselves. Men and women were *staying in different houses* and women, children, and old people were being kept in a protected area. Throughout this period, males were staying in less safe houses and create a barrier between the females' houses and dangerous situations:

We were initially separated from the men because of the multiplicity of women and children. For example, we rented two houses. Women and men were required to live in separate houses. The house for women and children was safer than the house for men. I mean, when something happened, men could move right away. Women are not like that. Women had children with them. They could not move quickly. There were also elderly people with us. So, the house was given to us was safer. Men, for example, were acting quickly when something happened, and they were relieved to know that we were safe. So, men stayed in the same territory, to respond to anything when something happened.

The intense fear they felt causes them to separate and to protect their own lives from the bombardment or any possible attacks:

We separated. For example, we took two separate houses. In one of these two houses, the men were eating and sleeping on their own, and the women were

on their own. There was no one who forced us to leave. But our desire to move away from the voices of war has separated us. If anything happens, God bless you, for example, there is a bomb outside. You feel the shaking places, the glass shakes. So, if anything happens, we were coming down in the basement. If there was a bombing on the house, the basement was safer. We lived under these circumstances. We were compelled to leave. We resisted not to leave our homes, but there were times when we forced to leave. We were getting out of fear. It was like this.

Another significant factor that impact interviewees' decision to migrate is *threatened sense of safety and personal security*. Refugees were exposed to violence and cruelty in Syria which shook their confidence to live and stay alive in their own country. All of the interviewees reported their lost sense of safety in their homeland because of the losses and bombs. Issues of personal security and threatened sense of safety appeared as another significant factor that affects refugees' decision to migrate:

Once, the Free Syrian Army has seen a paper with me. I was going to college. I was both studying and working. On the paper in my hand, it was written that I could enter the university whenever I want. I went to Damascus. On the way back, they stopped me and threatened me. They surround me with guns. These events have happened many times. Therefore, I decided to sit at home. Because whenever I leave the house my mother advised me not to stay in Syria.

My son and I were very afraid. We were getting up in the middle of the night because of the voices of explosives. The panes were trembling from the severity of the bombs.

I do not believe that my country is safe.

Interviewees generally reported their lost sense of safety in their homeland which appears as a significant determinant in their migration decision. Participants' sense of safety threatened severely, and they reported that even after the war, their country will not be a safe place for them. Despite having family members living in Syria, refugees are not considering returning back and live there again after the hardships they encountered:

According to my opinion, the confidence and security lost in Syria will never come back. I do not want to go back even if I can. Of course, if Syria will be cleaned from the Assad troops, I will keep in touch.

Even if Assad troops go now, I will not think that the country will be cleaned. Assad has long nails. I mean, I do not have any confidence. I cannot go back. But I have a sister whom I have not seen for 6 years and I miss her very much. She is still in Syria. But I do not want to go back to Syria. Because I have no sense of trust.

*Worsened economic conditions* are one of the factors that influence refugees' migration decision to a new country to the unknown. Before migration, refugees lost their jobs and were not able to earn money to sustain their lives. Refugees reported that during the war they had no job to go, their economic condition was worsened and the price for foods increased. As a result of having no access to work and make a living, refugees prefer to migrate to a different country to maintain their lives:

There was no work in Syria. When the war started, people lost their jobs. We only had the food we eat.

There was no business because of the war. My father was a state officer in the center of Aleppo. My father left his job and left everything behind due to the war. He started to work in iron production and trade with my uncles. He was earning less money when it compared with a state officials' salary. The situation and life were very difficult.

In recent times everything was started to be very expensive due to the war and we could not buy anything in Syria.

Not being able to sustain their lives because of the financial conditions and unemployment is stated as one of the factors that affect refugees' decision to migrate. Participants motive to come to Turkey is affected by better living conditions and better job opportunities:

No, actually, I am skilled in aluminum. In aluminum decoration. Like the offices. That's what I was doing. That's why I wanted to come to Turkey. I've heard I could have a better job here, life is better here so I could have a better life. Then I decided.

*Deprivation from staple foods, electricity, and water* emerged as an important factor that complicated refugees' lives and make their lives difficult before their departure. Because of not being able to maintain their lives and fulfill their needs in Syria seen as another factor influence their migration decision to Turkey:



Electricity and water were given very rarely at certain times. When water is given, we were filling the big buckets with water to have water after they cut it.

But then, life became very difficult. Pressure increased, we cannot afford to buy food because the prices increased a lot.

Let's say you wanted to buy bread. You had to wait in front of the oven for 3-4 hours in the bread line. Just to buy bread. So, it's one of the main ingredients for the living.

Even the vital food was so hard to reach. You could not eat what you wanted. Like meat. We could not get meat even once a month.

The worsened economic conditions and the difficulty of accessing water, electricity and staple foods were some of the factors that make refugees feel desperate and force them to live under difficult conditions. Additionally, *losing their freedom* to maintain their lives made them feel bad and sorry. The aim of getting free from the restriction over their freedom appeared as a significant factor to take a decision to leave their country:

I mean I was not feeling so bad because we cannot meet our basic things and it is not because of the aircraft and bombing. I was feeling bad about being lost our freedom.

When they were asked about their past experiences, almost all of the interviewees reported their memories of the violence and terror they were exposed to. Two of the refugees were terrorized either by the regime troops or by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Also, the pressure they felt over their lives influenced the psychosocial wellbeing of refugees. Refugees mentioned about the *terror and systematic violence* which include but not limited to terror and humiliation they faced during the war:

When I went to high school, the cops arrested me for 2 days, for no reason and then they got me out. These policemen had to leave us because they decided to fight in the free army.

Assad troops took many people away from their homes. There are too many people losing their lives because their homes were bombed while they were sitting in their homes. Many people have been imprisoned.

The violence and terror they were exposed to instill fear on refugees. Even if the attacks were not near to them, they stated that the effects were felt in their own houses. Therefore, they feared, and this fear forced them to leave their homes:

But one day a house around our apartment was bombed. The bombed house was neither in our neighborhood nor in our immediate vicinity, but our home's ceiling began to shake and break. We were scared and ran.

Barrel bombs were thrown on us. The guns were fired. There was too much bombing. Our house was hit by a rocket. Our home has been completely blowing up. Too many people have been killed.

Refugees experiences of war affected their migration decisions. *Facing persecutions* and/or *fear of imprisonment* spread fear on refugees since they cannot ask or did not know anything about the ones who were persecuted. Persecution was associated with death and refugees fear to lose their lives because of the imprisonment for no apparent reason which motivated them to migrate to a safer place that they can be able to protect themselves. Two out of seven the refugees reported about the risks of losing their life and persecution that they faced during the war. Participants did not know which side will be going to arrest them and for what reasons. For instance, two of the interviewees reported on the risks of losing their life and persecution that they faced during the war. The uncertainty of what will happen to their lives spread terror among refugees. The violence and terror they were exposed to instill fear on refugees. Fear of persecution for no apparent reason and humiliation is also significant for their desire to move to a place that they will feel safe and secure:

I did not get arrested. But they started to humiliate me, to insult me. In the face of this treatment, of course, I have met many times with the threat of arrest and death during the war. I was about to be arrested two times by the Assad troops. I was about to be arrested by the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

I was scared. Because my friends, relatives have been jailed and tortured. So far, for 5 years, my aunt's son is under arrest. We do not know anything about him. We cannot ask. Because if you ask, they will arrest you too. We're scared. Because of this fear, I do not want to return to Syria. Nobody can ask about me if I'm arrested. That's the problem.

The arrest could happen in street or while they were going to somewhere they used to go in their usual day or even when they were sitting in their houses. Daily lives seemed affected because of the risk of persecution. Refugees were not able to maintain their lives in a way that they were before the war. Disruption of refugees' everyday life and the problems they were exposed to force refugees to migrate from their homeland. These arrestments caused people to fear from their own country and affect their current lives. Because of the fear of persecution, refugees reported that they fear and not wanted to return back to Syria. They mentioned what happened to their arrested friends and fear to live the same thing:

When I went to high school, the cops arrested me for 2 days and then they got me out. These policemen had to leave us because they decided to fight in the free army.

Assad troops took many people away from their homes. There are too many people losing their lives because their homes were bombed while they were sitting in their homes. Many people have been arrested.

In conclusion, the refugees' decision to leave Syria is influenced by more than one factor which is triggered by war conditions. Displacement in their country several times, threatened sense of safety, worsened economic conditions, restriction of access to staple foods, electricity and water, restriction of their freedom, torture and systematic violence and fear of persecution were some of the significant factors that affect interviewed refugees' psychosocial health and living conditions. These factors forced refugees to leave their country and run a risk of long journeys to unknown destinations for better living conditions.

#### **4.1.2. Flight to Turkey**

Interviewees' flight processes include unsecured and long journeys to unknown destinations. Six (85%) out of seven interviewed refugees took long journeys and paid smugglers to arrive in Turkey. Only one of the participants arrived in Turkey through legal ways. Refugees' memories of the transition process, who prefer illegal ways to come to Turkey, evoked some traumatic memories. Even if there was no guarantee

that they will arrive at a safe place, refugees preferred to use illegal ways for the flight which involves too many hardships:

It was raining when we were on the road, and all the roads we flee were tanned. We went out with the tractor. We were too many people in the tractor, I was afraid that it would be a rollover. We had difficulty in walking. The last time we approached the Turkish border, the Turkish military commenced fire.

We stayed for 7 days on the mountain. Smugglers were bringing our food. We walked from Syria to Turkey. It was difficult. There were 8 years old child had a diabetic. You know, I mean, diabetic drugs had to be cold all the time. Always they should be cold. The smugglers were always bringing ice for that child.

Because of the hardships they experienced during their transition process, some wanted to return to the unsafe places they were escaping from:

Truly, when I saw the way we came in illegal ways, I told my husband to go back. If we cannot make it, let's go back. I wanted to return. My husband said no, let's continue on our way. The smugglers told us returning is much more difficult from that time. We finished our journey, but I was really bad. I wanted to cry, but I could not cry so my husband would not feel bad.

The transition includes a high risk of being killed or injured seriously. Refugees took long journeys to arrive in a safe place under bad conditions:

For example, on the way, we were stuck in a house and could not get out. We were stuck in a house for about 20 days. They were organizing an attack on a school. Assad troops and the Free Syrian Army. The two were fighting and we were in the middle of the two parties. I don't know how we made good our escape, God helped us to get out of there.

My immigration process was very difficult. It was deathly. Yes, I came to Turkey, but it was deathlike. The gendarmerie caught me. I had a backpack. He caught me in my bag and started to beat me. I took my bag off and I started to run. I run away from him. He caught me in my jacket. I also took my jacket off. All that remains on my hand was my identity and my cell phone. He opened fire while I was running. I finally came to Turkey.

Smuggling seems affecting their entrance to a new country. Even they wanted to take this long journey to a safe place on their own, refugees were prohibited by the smugglers on both sides of the border:

We had to pay money to smugglers both in Syria and Turkey. You have to pay. I paid for it too. If you do not pay, you cannot leave, they will not let you leave Syria. If you do not pay smugglers when you came to Turkey, smugglers in Turkey's and Syria's side made trouble. It was really difficult.

Refugees also asked why they decided to migrate to Turkey and not other neighboring countries such as Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon. Two out of seven refugees reported that before they migrated to Turkey they went to Lebanon; however, due to some reasons, they came to Turkey. The first reason was the discrimination they faced when they were living in Lebanon as Syrian refugees. Refugees reported that there was a conflict between Shiah and Sunni and since Syrians were Sunni, they were exposed to torture and received death threats. Therefore, they worried about their lives and migrated to Turkey. When refugees make comparisons among the four neighboring countries, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon; Turkey is the best choice among these four countries because of its economic and social conditions. Refugees may come to Turkey for better employment conditions and for the hope to achieve better socio-economic status or they simply may want to use Turkey as a route to arrive in Europe. Additionally, one of the refugees reported that most of the Syrians in Turkey came from Aleppo and the people of Damascus preferred to go Jordan because of the proximity. Aleppo and Turkey were very close to each other and refugees and it was easier for refugees to come to Turkey. Similarity of the cultures that Syria and Turkey shares were other factors that attract Syrians. Interviewed refugees reported that When they compare Turkey with other European countries at least they can hear sounds of adhan and have more in common with Turkey since both countries adopt Islam as religion.

#### **4.2. Resettlement Experiences of Syrians**

After arriving in Turkey, refugees mentioned about either discriminative attitudes and hardships that disappointed them and complicated their adjustment process or cases of economic recovery which helps them to get started again and instilled hope. Resettlement experiences of Syrians are detailed under three sections and subsections under each of the sections: (1) Issues and Challenges in the Adjustment Process, (2)

Strengths and Assets of Syrians, and (3) Factors Impacting Adjustment Process. The flow of this part with is provided in Figure 3- Resettlement Experiences of Syrians

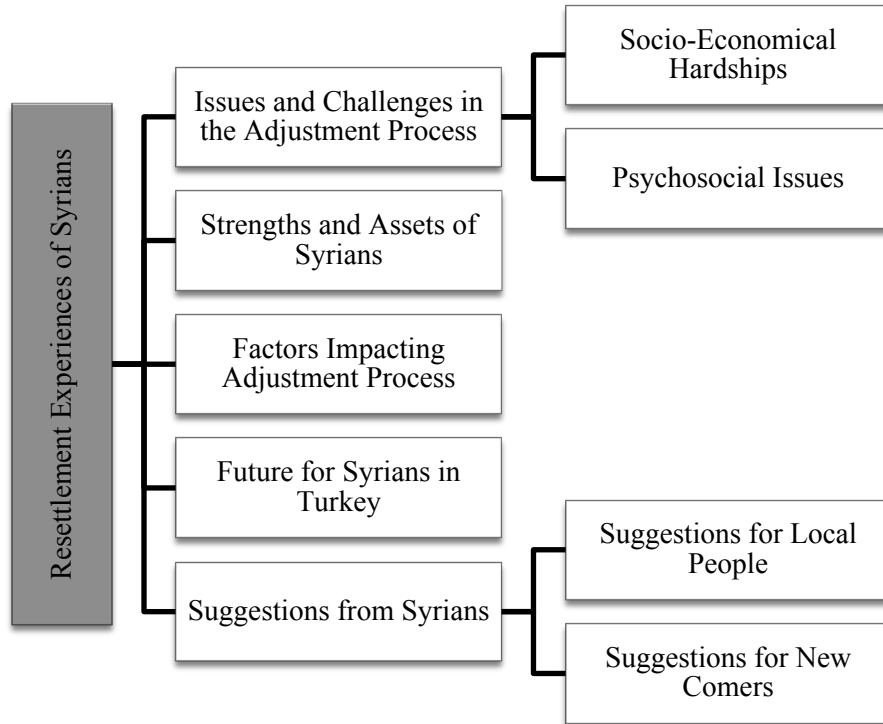


Figure 3: Resettlement Experiences of Syrians

#### 4.2.1. Issues and Challenges in the Adjustment Process

During their adjustment to a new country, refugees face many difficulties and hardships. Interviewed Syrian refugees who resettled in Turkey mentioned about both socio-economic hardships and psychosocial issues that they experienced during their resettlement process. Refugees' adjustment experiences were specified in sub-sections under two main section which is (1) Socio-Economic Hardships and (2) Psychosocial Issues. Refugees' issues and challenges in the adjustment process with its subsections are given in Figure 4- Issues and Challenges in the Adjustment Process

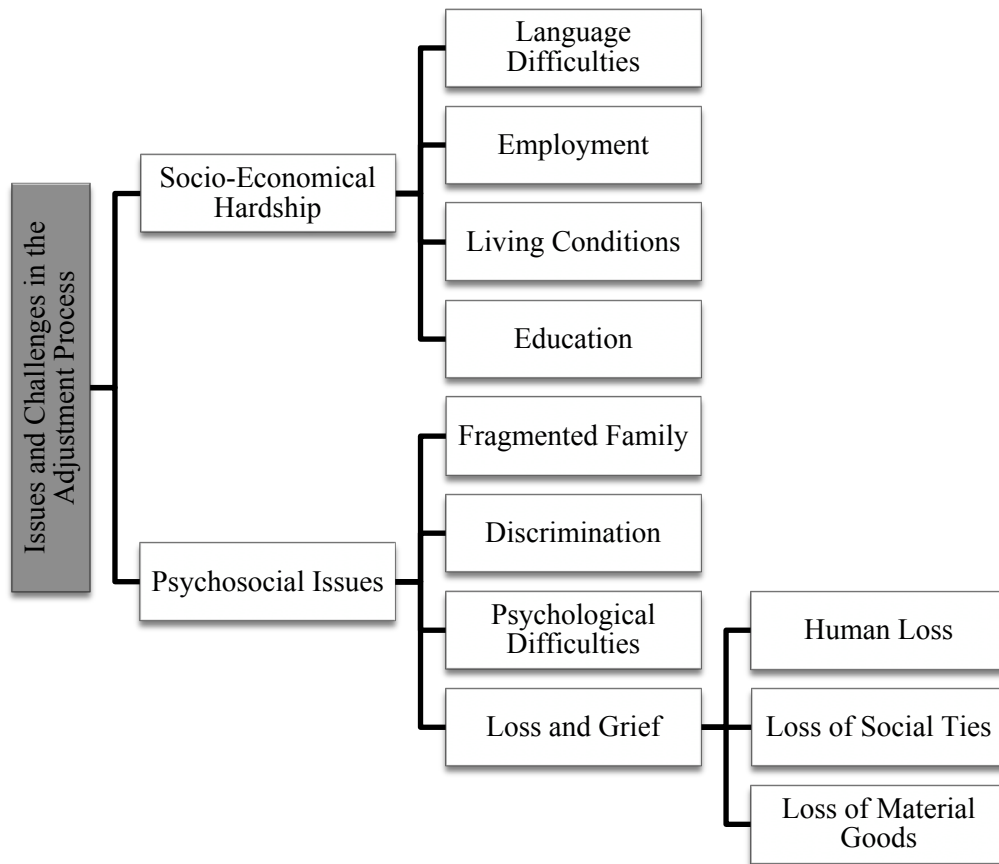


Figure 4: Issues and Challenges in the Adjustment Process

#### 4.2.1.1. Socio-Economic Hardships

Socio-economic difficulties that frequently mentioned by participants of this study were language difficulties, issues of employment and living conditions. Not knowing the host country's language, faced with economic hardships, living conditions and not being able to continue their education seems as significant challenges that complicate refugees' adjustment process. Each of these challenges is mentioned below.

##### 4.2.1.1.1. Language Difficulties

Knowing or learning the language of the host country is a significant part of the integration process. A small number of the participants were able to speak Turkish

fluently while the majority of them still cannot speak or understand the language. All of the participants reported that they found it is difficult to learn Turkish. Language seems the most common barrier to their resettlement experiences. Reasons behind this problem were (1) not communicating with local people and (2) neither being understood nor understand what is told to them:

Wherever we go, they are telling us to learn Turkish. OK, we want to learn but how. My father-in-law has been looking at online courses on YouTube for over 3 years. He could not learn. Because it is very difficult to learn the language without talking with the Turks and those who know the language. Let's talk Turkish but with whom. There is nobody in our surroundings who can speak Turkish.

Also, having children, not being able to use public transportation to reach the language centers, heavy workload or simply the fear to forget their own culture and language prevent refugees from mastering Turkish. Interviewees emphasized the difficulty they had while trying to learn the language:

My husband wants to work in a place that he has expertise in. But, he cannot speak Turkish. So, he's responsible for the whole family. An individual who has a wife, two children, a mother, and a father cannot leave all this family and learn Turkish. To do so, there must be something supporting him, or Turkish language teaching must be after working hours or on Saturdays and Sundays. There is no such thing. I see young Syrian people in Turkey, they learned Turkish and found jobs with their university diplomas. I envy them. These young people have no family and no one to be responsible. But my husband is being persecuted. Because he does not speak Turkish.

#### **4.2.1.1.2. Employment**

Refugees who are not satisfied with the work conditions in the host country complained about heavy workload, low wages and discriminative attitudes of the employers. Refugees are loaded with heavier works than local people, not paid fully or received a lower salary than local people even if they are doing the same job and cannot benefit from their employees' rights:

My husband and my father-in-law could not get salaries. It was 3000 Turkish liras in total. In another job, their 6,000 Turkish liras were not given. They were working, but they could not get their salaries.



My husband's uncle also did not get his money from the place he was working. No matter how hard he tried to get their money, they could not. His employer told him I will give you the money. He went to receive his money. But his employer closeted him in the room and beat him. He oppressed... Then the police came and picked them up. They went on trial, but his uncle did not get his money.

Working hours are too long. When I was in the baker, I started work at 7 in the morning and worked up to 8 in the evening. Yes, I was making money, but I could not receive a recompense for my work.

My brother-in-law who was married had problems at work. His employer did not give his salary and he could not find a job for a while. He had a lot of trouble. He was working all the time, but he cannot get his money. Or his employer gave 50 Turkish liras when he had to pay 200 Turkish liras. When my brother-in-law asked for his salary, his employer was paid 50 TL. It had no meaning to pay him in that way. Each time they give his money in parts like this. Unless they give the money entirely, what can I do with that money? Then he found a job in Sincan. It's a tough job. He works all the time and there is no holiday. The job has long working hours.

For educated refugees, it is harder to work in a job different from their own specialty. The non-recognition of occupational skills and not being able to find an appropriate job caused hopelessness in the interviewees. Not being employed on the job that they are qualified seems another factor affecting the resettlement process. Lack of financial support is also preventing refugees from regaining their previous and they had to accept the low-status job they are working now:

My husband was a state official in Syria. However, currently, he is working as a tailor. They treat him badly in the work. His employer is not remunerating him. He still cannot get his full salary. It's not just happening to my husband. All Syrians are experiencing the same thing. No matter how long they work, they cannot receive a recompense for their work, Sometimes, they work on the weekends.

Moreover, some of the interviewees reported hardships in finding a job and to maintain their lives they had to become indebted to their friends or relatives:

When we first arrived, we faced with many difficulties. We looked for a house for a long time, but we could not find a home to live in. We stayed at my husband's aunt's house for a while. In recent times, when we could not find a house, we thought to return to Syria. Also, my husband could not find a job.

Currently, we owe about \$ 2500. Because my husband could not find a job for a while.

#### **4.2.1.1.3. Living Conditions**

Refugees face difficulties while looking for a house to rent. The homeowners are not wanting to rent their homes to refugees. Interviewees look for a long time to find houses to live:

There are some Syrians in this region, but very few, the homeowners do not want to rent their houses to Syrians. One in a million.

Besides, no one rented us a house. We look for a house a lot. They asked for Turkish guarantor. We say that we have a guarantor. Later, they said they wanted the guarantor to work as a state officer. A person in the municipality told us that he would be our guarantor. But this time they asked where he is working. They did not like his job. They did not want him to work in any kind of profession in the state.

Sometimes I go to look a house for rent, for example. We do not want foreigners. They say that right away. They do not usually give it for rent.

Some of the interviewees mentioned the discriminative attitudes of the Turks in the buildings they live in. Sometimes, discriminative behaviors can be felt through certain attitudes of people such as their unwillingness to speak or interact with refugees:

But there is one more thing. Our neighbors do not like the Syrians. They never even look at us. They do not even say hello. When we say hello, they do not take our greetings.

They do not like us. They do not talk to us. They have no idea how the Syrians are working and having cars. They cannot accept. They think that we have a salary from somewhere and that the government is giving us money.

The difficulties to find housing and even if they found a place to live, the discriminative attitudes came from their neighbors which make them feel that they are not wanted. These behaviors hamper their adaptation process.

#### **4.2.1.1.4. Education**

During their resettlement processes, two out of seven interviewed refugees mentioned about their process of seeking opportunities to continue their education in Turkey. Two of the young refugees valued education greatly. Being able to gain an education encouraged and helped refugees to enjoy their lives. However, the ones who were not able to access education experienced resettlement stress:

I was studying in high school while in Syria. I could not go to the exams when the war started. Because the situation there was very bad. When we come to Turkey, I had to learn Turkish. I thought how will I graduated high school, how I will go to college? It is very difficult to go to school in Turkey. I lost my hope for education. I said I will not go to school anymore. Then I heard that there are Arab schools. There were schools in Sudan, Libya, Iraq, and Jordan. I have visited all of them.

Refugees who were not being able to achieve to get university degrees in Turkey were less hopeful and more depressed which in turn caused some difficulties during their resettlement process:

I would like to go to Europe if I can. I want to go more often when things like this happen. I really want to complete my education.

I tried to continue my education here, but it did not happen. The job is very difficult. There is nothing here that I am comfortable and happy with. We came here because of the war. I wanted to be in my country. To continue my life ...

If I can go to another country, I can make my dreams come true. I can complete my education.

#### **4.2.1.2. Psychosocial Issues**

Adjustment process of refugees is hampered by psychosocial issues too. Fragmented family, discriminative attitudes, suffering from psychological difficulties and loss of social networks, family and material goods emerged as significant factors that inhibit refugees from experiencing smooth resettlement process.

#### 4.2.1.2.1. Fragmented Family

Interviewees who separated from their family members, in other words, the ones who leave their families in Syria and migrate to Turkey had psychosocial difficulties in adjusting to their new environment. Deterioration of family cohesion and lack of parental support affect refugees' psychological wellbeing negatively. The ones who leave their families behind feel the absence of emotional support and reported more depressive feelings and sorrow. During our interviews it can be understood that being with family members and get their support had great importance for refugees:

Here, I am not feeling good psychologically. I'm far away from my family and I cannot go to them because of the war.

I mean, as I said, I am psychologically stronger in some ways but weaker in other aspects. Because I could not see my family. I would like to have my family with me in Turkey. My family does not want to live here, though.

My life in Syria was more beautiful. My brothers were married. I could spend time with their spouse. There was my uncle's daughter, for example. I was sharing my secrets with them. We were having a good time together.

It seems that being away from family members had negative impacts on the adjustment process and psychological well-being of refugees. The family is seen as a source of support and being with family carry significant meaning for refugees. Refugees who were away from their family feel that they can neither receive the support that they needed from family members nor they had someone that can comfort them as the family can:

I am here, and my family is in Jarabulus. I have 8 more brothers. Each of us was scattered in different places. No see. There is nothing left in the name of the family. This is so hard.

I am living with my friends. I worked a while ago and made some savings. I'm all alone. I am not comfortable spiritually. I feel good neither psychologically nor economically, I'm not good. Even my friends who are supposed to support me psychologically are not good. They are not good psychologically. They are already busy with themselves.

#### 4.2.1.2.2. Discrimination

Almost all of the participants mentioned the discrimination that they had been exposed in Turkey. Although they had been mentioned that they are treated well in Turkey, they mentioned at least one discrimination attitude that they are subjected in the host country. Refugees' perceptions of acceptance and discrimination within Turkey appeared as significant factors that hamper the adaptation process. Refugees who exposed to acts of discrimination had little connections with people from Turkey and reported more feelings of loneliness and sadness. Participants were subjected to acts of discriminations either by their neighbors in the buildings they live in or in public spaces when they were walking or at work:

For example, in the workplace. You encounter people who do not like the Syrians in the workplace. They were treating us badly from time to time.

He still cannot get his full salary. It's not just happening to my husband. All Syrians are experiencing the same thing. No matter how long they work, they cannot receive a recompense for their work. Sometimes, they work on the weekends.

Refugees were subjected to the discriminative attitudes at hospitals from health professionals since refugees do not know Turkish or have more children than local people.

I cannot speak with most of the doctors because I do not know Turkish. I told the doctors I can speak English. They are getting mad at me. "No Arabic, no English. No French. Just learn Turkish, learn! ". I mean, I feel a lot of anger at the doctors.

Refugees also exposed to discrimination when they were walking in streets or public places in forms of verbal and nonverbal behaviors of people because of being Syrian refugee. Being a Syrian refugee and not knowing the language is among the factors that lead to discrimination:

But there are also difficult ones. So, being abroad and not knowing the language is the most compelling ones. There are people around me who lording over Syrians. This is so hard.

They tell us you are Syrians, you will not stay here permanently. Even on the street, there are people who bother us when we walk. Even if they do not do anything, they gave us a black look.

But sometimes we meet people who do not like us and look at the Syrians with evil eyes. They told us, "what are you doing here, return to Syria, do not stay here". They do not like us. They do not want to deal with us.

Local people disturb refugees in public spaces. Interviewees mentioned about their feelings about these attitudes and feeling of discomfort:

When we walk on the road, they stop us and say, " The war is over in Syria, what are you doing in Turkey, return to your homeland". Firstly, my home in Syria was razed. And all the other people's homes were razed to the ground. There was no place to work there. The most important thing is that men under the age of 40 are being taken into military service with Assad troops. They are conscripted. We are not fighting with Israel or any other state. We are killing each other out there. How I will return and fight with the soldiers who kill the people of their own nation. "

A woman from Turks stopped me in the street and told me that the youngsters of Turks were taken and sent to fight in Syria. She asked why you were not going and fighting. She told us you go and fight. We are killing the children and people of our own country. How can we go.

Refugees exposed to discriminative attitudes of the Turks in the buildings they live in. The discriminative attitudes came from their neighbors which make them feel that they are not wanted. Sometimes, discriminative behaviors can be felt through certain attitudes of people such as their unwillingness to speak or interact with refugees:

But there is one more thing. Our neighbors do not like the Syrians. They never even look at us. They do not even say hello. When we say hello, they do not take our greetings.

They do not like us. They do not talk to us. They have no idea how the Syrians are working and having cars. They cannot accept. They think that we have a salary from somewhere and that the government is giving us money.

Refugees do not want to return to Syria even the war is ended in their country. They will not be able to return in the near future since Syria needs more time to heal its wounds and be as before:

Many people stop us on the way and say, "the war is over, go back to your country". This is just an example. They do not know that our country is destroyed. If, as they say, the war is really over, the country needs 10 years to relapse.

Previously wherever I go people were telling me "You Syrians loaded Turkey. We do not like Syrians. Why do not you go to your country? Why did you leave your country, why you did not fight?" Bombs were being thrown at us from the planes, how can we fight with the plane. We want to live a safe happy life. We do not have to in war. What's so bad about going to another country to live.

The discriminative attitudes affect the adaptation process of the interviewees negatively. Exposure to discrimination makes them feel bad about themselves. Seeing that they are not wanted in the host country causes depressed feelings and hamper refugees' adjustment process.

#### **4.2.1.2.3. Psychological Difficulties**

After arriving in a safe place refugees struggle to adjust to the new environment. Refugees who lack social support reported feelings of loneliness and the ones who leave family members in Syria feel more depressed than the participants who have their family with them. Refugees who lose their social networks and do not form new ones in the host country feel sadness and mourning for the past:

I was happier in Lebanon. There was no one of my relatives. But there were my neighbors. I was loving my neighbors very much. We all were sitting at 10 in the morning and drunk tea and coffee, every day. All my days were passing with my neighbors. We were laughing and talking. I was happier in Lebanon than I am here.

My life in Syria was more beautiful. My brothers were married. I could spend time with their spouses. There was my uncle's daughter. I was sharing my secrets with them. I was having a good time with them. We were very important to each other. We were all together. We were having a good time. I would like to have some of those people I'm counting on with me in Turkey. Maybe, I will not be worn off, if some of these people were with me in Turkey. Maybe, I will not be that bored.

#### **4.2.1.2.4. Loss and Grief**

Refugees losses include loss of significant people either their people from their family members or friends, loss of their social networks or loss of material goods such as their homes and lands. These multiple losses aroused as significant factors hampering their process of adaptation to a new country. Refugees experience multiple losses affects their mental well-being which is mostly resulted in grieving for their losses and feelings of depressed and anxious.

##### **4.2.1.2.4.1. Human Loss**

Refugees' worst traumatic experience is facing with the death of close family members. Refugees reported that their relatives and loved ones killed suddenly, some while walking on the street and some sitting in their houses due to bombing and fire. Since mentioning about their losses made them feel upset, participants withdraw to answer more questions about their losses. It was clear that remembering their losses affect refugees' well-being negatively. All the participants experienced multiple losses in their home country who were either their friends and family members that is well-known to them:

Nizam (Assad) troops killed my brother with a submachine gun. He was trying to cross over the street with his pajamas. He was not tied to any group or person. But they shoot him with a submachine gun. We took him to hospital. I do not want to tell you about the part about my brother. It hurts me to remember.

Our close relatives lost their lives. My uncle and aunt's sons were killed. Both were killed on the same day. They were on the street. They lost their lives because of bombs dropped on them from the plane.

Most of my friends lost their lives. For example, most of my friends have been killed in the war. Too many people from our relatives and from our village killed. We are very adversely affected by the war. We came here yes, we are not happy, but we can live here. It is the best of a bad lot. We left everything behind us. For example, my friends, we were 23 in high school. Sixteen of them were killed. 3 were injured. The remaining ones are alive.



Losing their relatives and friends in an unnatural way and suddenly affect refugee's resettlement processes. While mentioning their losses, some of them did not want to answer more questions about their losses, some trying to hide their sadness with a smile and their eyes filled with tears. The effects of these losses were still felt and can be seen in the participants' physical reactions when they were asked about their losses. Even after years, frequently thinking about their past life in their own country and remember their losses that make refugees feel sorry which in turn affect their psychological well-being:

We were worn out psychologically when my brother was a martyr. In fact, my grandmother lost her life because a bomb was thrown at her house. I also have other relatives who killed. But among them, it was the murder of my brother that affected us mostly. When we remember my brother, we all still sit and cry. I will not tell you this part for this reason. All the things we experienced when we took my brother to the hospital were very influential. Even up to now, I sit and cry when I watch TV and see a doctor who has gone out of surgery. This subject knocks me out.

But those who lost their lives in Syria comes to my mind a lot. There was a child who lost his life at the age of five. The last time we see him was when he was 5 years old and he will always be 5 years old. When we see him in the photographs, we wish to see it again. Because he was so loyal and good-natured. When he was alive we always told that he will not complete his life, and Allah will take him, and he will be a bird in heaven. Subhan Allah, it was like that.

Losses affect refugee's wellbeing and resettlement process in different ways. After losing their family members in sudden and unnatural ways, some mentioned the increased responsibilities they had. Losing his brother and having to take care of all family on his own, one of the interviewees reported that after migration to a new country he had increased anxiety and worry about losing his job and not being able to look at his family. Another interviewee reported that after they lost everything, he dropped out of the school and migrate to work for his family:

Of course, all the responsibility is on my shoulder. As I said. Since my brother lost his life, there is no one supporting me financially. I have a family I'm responsible for. For this reason, there are times when I cannot get myself to think that what if I will be permanently unemployed.

I was not working while I was in Syria. My father was working, my brother was working. Now, I became the only one responsible for the whole family. This increased my responsibilities greatly.

Other interviewees mentioned the changes he underwent after the war and after the losses he experienced:

I changed after I left Syria. I was not working there. I was going to school. My dad was giving me money. I had to work after arriving in Turkey. I left alone. I learned a lot after the war. Life is different. Nobody cares about me if I do not look at myself. I have to take care of myself.

Increased responsibility not only affect male refugees but also females mentioned the responsibilities they had to carry after separating from their family members. Living with her 6 years old son, one of the refugees reported the responsibility of taking care of his son.

I have a responsibility. It is my son's responsibility. This year he will actually go to school, actually, he is five and a half years old. This year he will enroll in a school. I cannot ask anyone to look at my son. I have to work and meet my son's needs.

#### **4.2.1.2.4.2. Loss of Material Goods**

Besides losing people close to them, the refugees lost their homes, lands and their home country during the war. Missing their homeland and homes seem one of the factors affect refugees' well-being and their adjustment processes. Losing their home was associated with loss of good memories and social ties they had in their home country. Also, loss of material goods is associated with losing their socio-economic status that they were achieved in their home country and coming to a new country while they had nothing:

We miss Syria very much. Because we had a home there, but we do not have a home right now. It was bombed and flooded. After we left, our house was bombed.

Life is more difficult here. This is another country. It is neither our own home nor our country. I'm surprised by what I was going through when I first came here.

After arriving in a new country and being safe, interviewees frequently think about their past life in their own country and remember the losses that make them feel sorry. Refugees' sadness and feelings can be felt and seen while they were mentioning their homeland:

I constantly think about and remember our home and our life there. I am not having my phone here right now, but I will show you the pictures. Since my family is still in Syria, they sent me photos of our house we had been living in a while ago. It's demolished.

#### **4.2.1.2.4.3. Loss of Social Ties**

Loss of social networks appeared as another factor that negatively impacts refugees' resettlement and adjustment process. Loss of social networks put refugees in a more vulnerable position that they become deprived of the social and emotional support that they are required to recover:

For example, I have no one I love right now. There is no one who loves me and supports me. As I said, I have no relatives here. The people who support me, the people I love, I share my secrets are far away from me.

I got tired. I am always at home, alone. I'm alone. I'm alone. I'm alone. No one comes and knocks at the door.

#### **4.2.2. Strengths and Assets of Syrians**

It appeared that family is significant for the Syrian community and refugees who have their family members with them reported more feelings of relief and less of loneliness in Turkey. The role of the family in refugees' lives cannot be underestimated. Another factor that appeared as the strength of refugees is their hope for the future. Despite the hardships they were and are experiencing and their losses, all the interviewees have wishes for their future life and work hard to make their dreams come true. Thirdly, participants of the study reported that the similarity of the Syrian and Turkish culture makes them feel good and less alienated. The similarity between the cultures is an asset of Syrians. Lastly, refugee women reported relatively more freedom for themselves. Refugee women when provided with the opportunity to work and stand on her own feet take this opportunity and can survive in a male-dominant society.

Strengths and assets of Syrian refugees are provided in Figure 5- Strengths and assets of Syrians and each of the emerged codes discussed in detail below.

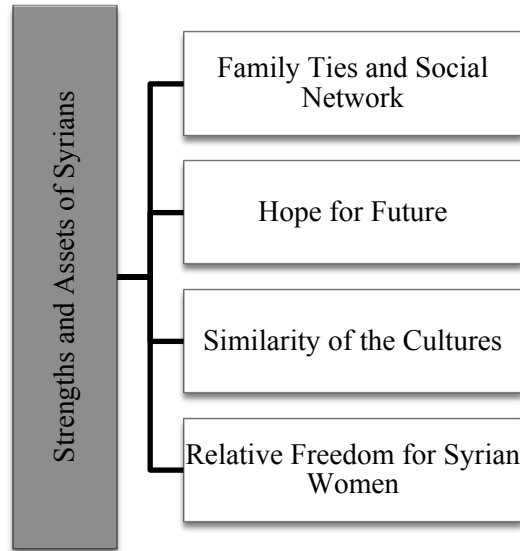


Figure 5: Strengths and Assets of Syrians.

#### 4.2.2.1. Family Ties and Social Network

Family ties and social networks are strengths of Syrian refugees which provide them with support and resources during their process of adjustment. Interviewed refugees had a strong sense of family cohesion. From the interviewed participants it is found that refugees who have their family members near to them were stronger and psychologically better than refugees who do not have their family with them. Passing time with family is preferred more than socializing with friends. Syrian refugees value family ties and visit each other frequently. The family is a source of strength.:

The most important people for me are my family, my husband, and my children.

From time to time my friends call me to go out. I love to spend time with them, but I think that it is better for me to be with my family.

I do not feel good psychologically here. I'm far away from my family and I can not go to visit them because of the war.

My parents and of course my wife are the ones who support me most. They take me under their wing and support me. If my family was not here, I would be feeling very bad. But alhamdulillah I have them.

Presence of their families and knowing that they are not alone relieve interviewed refugees and provide strength. The support and guidance received from family have a positive impact on refugees' well-being:

If for some reason I get angry at home, they give me psychological support. That's what I feel is the most support-help thing to me. No matter how tired I get tired, I feel relieved to go home and see my family no matter what.

Family and relatives are a source of support in hard times too. Participants reported that when they lost their significant ones or when they decided to migrate to Turkey, their relatives provided them with support which is a strength of the Syrian community:

When my brother lost his life, everybody called us. All of our relatives, my aunt, my uncle, my friends supported us psychologically.

#### **4.2.2.2. Hope for Future**

Despite being exposed to traumatic events, refugees still were hopeful about the possibility of a better future and it seems that this hope makes them stronger and give them the power to struggle for a better life. Refugees sense of hope served them as a source of positivity and facilitate their coping with resettlement stressors.

I'm constantly trying to look ahead. So, I say to myself, "Maybe tomorrow will be better, maybe I will find a job with a better salary and live in better living conditions with my family.

Refugees talked about carving out a better future for themselves and their family members.

I want to get citizenship. Like I said, I want to do my dream job. My life will be better on this count.

#### **4.2.2.3. Similarity of The Cultures**

Participants reported that their lives in Turkey are different and similar depending on the context of their mainstream lifestyle in Syria. Some participants mentioned the similarities between Turkish culture and Syrians' culture that makes them like Turkey more:

After coming to Turkey, I saw that your culture and customs are very similar to ours. Upon arriving, I liked Turkey more.

Refugees were feeling good about sharing the same religion and practices with locals. Some of the refugees reported that they had a chance to migrate to European countries; however, they preferred to stay in Turkey since they had more in common in terms of social and cultural practices. When refugees compare Turkey with other European countries, refugees acknowledged that they had difficulties in maintaining their lives but on the other hand, having common practices, values and sharing similar lifestyles appeared as an asset that refugees were benefiting from.

#### **4.2.2.4. Relative Freedom for Syrian Women**

The difference in women's lives is mentioned by participants. Refugee women described their experiences in Turkey and in Syria and mentioned the differences in their lives here in Turkey. Female refugees were mentioned that their practices in Syria are mostly adapted according to cultural practices and society's expectations also affected by their religious practices. Females have relatively more freedom in Turkey and are able to use this freedom when they are given the chance:

My life is very different right now. I am stronger than I am in the past. I used to be unable to say anything to anyone who did bad things to me. But now I can resist against bad people. I became a strong woman. I am a woman standing on her own feet and not relying on others. I am a free woman who can do whatever I want. I work, I read, I love. I do things I want. It was something I wanted to have in my own life. It is very difficult for women in Syria to work and stand on their feet. Women in Syria has to depend on a man.

Syrian men are very oppressive. Women are afraid of men. If women show men that they are strong, men can do nothing. Really. Because there is the state, there is law in and there are police. The woman has things make her feel safe. There are woman rights. There is something called woman rights in Syria, but only with the name. It was not enforced. The man can marry with four women if he wants.

We were in a conservative environment when we were in Syria. When I was in Syria I was covering my face with a veil. I was neither meeting men, nor talking to men. For example, when I was going out, my brother or my father was coming with me. For instance, my uncle's son does not know me. We were just seeing our uncles.

Moreover, three out of four participants reported that they married under 18 in Syria. They were having at least one child which is a difference between Syria and Turkey. In Turkey, women do not marry before 18; however, in Syria, they married, and the women's rights are limited to the laws. In Turkey, women have relatively more freedom to access their human rights and use them to stay on their own feet and become stronger:

I am stronger now than I am in the past. I used to be unable to say anything to anyone who treated me bad. But now I can stand up against the ones who behave badly. I became a strong woman. I became a woman standing on her own feet and not resting on others. I became a free woman who could do whatever I wanted. I work, I read, I love. I do things I want. It was something I wanted to have in my own life. It is very difficult for women in Syria to work and stand on their feet. Women have to be dependent on a man to live.

The working status of participants is significant to refer. Because, two out of four female participants reported they are working in Turkey but, in Syrian culture and in Syria, it is very rare that women are seen in working life. The women reported that they have to work because of changed living conditions. However, in Syria, they had to stay under the responsibility of a man (father, brother, husband etc.) and working women were widows or state officials. Thus, another descriptive table was created for working females and the distribution of females in the occupation category is provided in Table 3:

Table 3

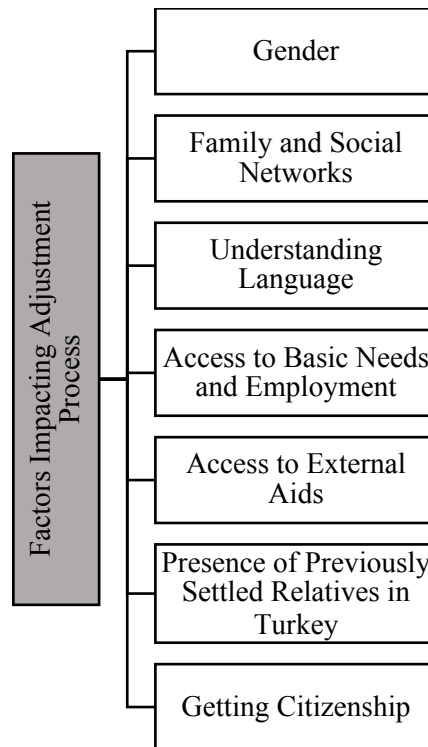
*Summary of distribution of working women interviewed*

Gender	No. of working participants	No. of not working participants
Females	2	2
Males	1	2

#### **4.2.3. Factors Impacting Adjustment Process**

Refugees' adjustment process is influenced by several factors. Female refugees reported different adjustment issues and challenges than male refugees which affected from gender roles. Secondly, refugees who receive social support, have their family near to them and form social networks reported a different process of adjustment and psychosocial well-being outcomes in Turkey. Understanding language emerged as one of the factors that ease refugees' adaptation process and provide them with the opportunity to access other resources available to them. Being able to fulfill their needs and access to labor market and financial assistance is also positively correlated with the process of adjustment. Additionally, having relatives previously settled in Turkey is another factor that provides refugees with social, economic and informational support and shares their resources which help newly arrived refugees to recover in a shorter time. Lastly, getting citizenship to appear as one of the factors that positively impact refugees process of adjustment. Factors impacting the adjustment process of refugees is given in Figure 6- Factors Impacting Adjustment Process below.





*Figure 6: Factors Impacting Adjustment Process*

#### **4.2.3.1. Gender**

Women reported that they are responsible for the house chores, childcare and from other things at home. Having all the responsibility on their shoulder and with limited mobility women cannot go outside on their own because of gender roles and society's pressure on women. Refugees live with big families and all family members are staying together. A married woman is responsible for her mother and father-in-law, her children, house chores and other things. There can also be her sister and brother in law living with them:

I want to learn Turkish. However, I find it difficult. They told me that I can bring my kids with me. But when I took them, they told me that my son is a junior, and the other kids beat my son. I have two children right now. I'm still breastfeeding the other. Then no, they say it is very difficult when you bring your children. So, they told me to learn. But how can I learn? I want to learn, but I have my two children, I am living with my husband's family.

Mastering a new language seems harder for women than men refugees. Culturally, not being able to go somewhere without having a male with them constraints women and other family work that she had to do in her daily tasks prevent female refugees from mastering Turkish:

I would very much like if my husband takes me to the Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM). I wish he accepts me to go alone if you let me out. My husband told me that he does not like the woman who goes out of the house all the time. And we are in a foreign country. This is not our country. My husband is afraid for me, you know.

#### **4.2.3.2. Family and Social Networks**

All of the participants mentioned their experiences of receiving social support during their resettlement process. Some of them reported about the emotional support they are receiving during this time and others reported a strong will to receive emotional support or about having someone that may support them. Receiving social support seems to have positive effects on the psychosocial wellbeing of refugees. The majority reported about the importance of family members and the significance of support they received from the family:

My mom, my dad, and my wife are the ones who support me spiritually. They take me under their wings and support me. If my family was not here, I would be very bad right now, but I have them, alhamdulillah.

Interviewees asked how these people are helping them and what they are doing to support them. Refugees reported that their family members are very supportive and provide comfort to them:

They comfort me by talking with me and giving me advice. Their behaviors also comfort me. At the moment, for example, my wife and children would be left alone at home if I had not had my parents here, and I will be thinking of them all day. But right now, I know that my parents are with my wife and children. It makes me very comfortable. Or for example, if I go home frustrated for any reason, they are supporting me psychologically. That's what I feel is the most supportive and helpful thing to me. No matter how tired I get, I feel relieved when I go home and see my family. No matter what. Talking to them certainly makes me feel more comfortable.

On the other hand, support that is received from state officials made refugees feel accepted and happy. These supports made refugees feel accepted and happy:

For example, when I go to the municipality they welcome me very well and they love my children very much. Turks immediately take my children, they love them, they play with them. They ask me, how are you? I am happy when I am welcomed.

When I go to the municipality, I go a lot to the municipality and they know me. I feel good when I feel that there are acceptance and importance given to me.

Support received from the local people seemed to have positive effects on the well-being of refugees. Refugees feel happy and accepted when they see someone treat them well:

Locals were very good at the Syrians. We are half Turks half Syrian. We are very happy to see that they behave so well to us. In this way, we begin to feel like one of them.

I feel good when I see Turks who are laughing and behaving well to us. When I go to the hospital, yes, there are people who act badly, but when I am treated well, at least I am positive when I can be treated.

From time to time, when we were walking public spaces, it makes us feel good when we see other people who are nice to us.

#### **4.2.3.4. Presence of Previously Settled Relatives in Turkey**

Having previously settled relatives in host country smooth adjustment process of refugees and decrease resettlement stressors. Interviewees frequently mentioned that they had relatives settled in Turkey before they came to. Their relatives provided them with the information that Turkey is a safe place, also they can find jobs to work and they can maintain their lives here. Also, after their arrival in Turkey, refugees stayed in their relatives' homes for a while until they found jobs and rent their houses.

My husband's brother and uncle were here in Turkey. They came to Turkey before and were working here. They told my husband to come to Turkey. However, my husband did not want to come because he already had a job in Syria. However, he saw the treatment done to him at work. In fact, he was asked to join the army even though he had done his military service. God

forbid, joining the army had a risk of death. For these reasons, he wanted to come to Turkey.... It happened like that. We came to Turkey with my husband.

Before coming to Turkey, refugees get information about the living conditions of Turkey and be sure that they will have someone to stay with for a while until they get used to the environment. Refugees who came to Turkey, stay with their relatives for a while and master the environment, get the help of their relatives in finding job or housing. Thus, refugees get both informational and instrumental support for the first stage of their resettlement process.

My uncle was here for one and a half year ago. My uncle told us you could come here and work here and continue your lives. We came. We left everything in Syria. We just had our clothes on us.

#### **4.2.3.5. Access to Basic Needs and Employment**

While not access to their basic needs made them feel depressed, after arriving in Turkey refugees reported that even having electricity and water in their houses and be able to reach their basic needs make them feel relieved and less stressed:

There's electricity, there's water. People probably do not realize that they are great blessings, but for us, it's a blessing. There are water, electricity, and internet. You can communicate with people. These are good things. There is a war in Syria right now, and even if the electricity comes, it will be within certain hours.

When we arrive in Turkey for the first time, I felt relieved. So, you see, in the simplest term there are water and electricity. You feel you are living in this world.

Being able to work and make a living in Turkey seems affecting refugee's psychosocial well-being in a positive way. Refugees who were employed also gain access to other basic needs since they can make money and afford their lives. Interviewees reported about the recovery of their economic conditions its effects on their resettlement processes. After finding a job, they become to live and maintain their lives in better conditions:

After my husband worked, we had few things. We had a small gas range. I was able to cook on it. Gradually, my husband started to make money and buy things. But he could not buy everything.

Then we went to our own home. Life is getting better. My father found a job. He cannot speak Turkish, but he is working as a dishwasher. Alhamdulillah, our situation began to improve gradually.

Alhamdulillah, I gathered myself. I saved some money. I got married. I bought a car. Now, I'm satisfied with my life.

#### **4.2.3.6. Access to External Aid**

Financial assistance appeared as one of the factors that help refugees to recover and to make their lives better. When it compared with refugees who were not access to financial assistance, refugees who access to financial aid reported more positive feelings since their living conditions are improved and they get better with time. However, the ones who were not taking financial assistance were reported feelings of depresses and sadness about the hardships they were experiencing in terms of their worsened economic conditions. Almost all the interviewees reported about how getting financial aid helped them and the ones who cannot get financial aid mentioned about their sadness of not reaching this financial support. Interviewees used financial aid to pay their rents and to achieve a better socio-economic status:

We started to get Red Crescent cards. This card has been very supportive of us for being able to pay the rent of our home.

And thanks to the financial support of Turkey that has provided us, as I said, we began to live at a level above the level of welfare which we were living in Syria.

On the other hand, those who cannot get financial assistance seemed more depressed and in a worse economic condition and socio-economic status than the ones who get financial support:

Everyone is getting help. They are getting cards from the Red Crescent, PTT. I swear to God, I did not get anything. Neither Red Crescent nor UNICEF cards. Everyone is taking money per child. I swear to God, I did not get any. I went and applied, they said they will call me, they did an interview with me.

But nobody called. I do not envy by gosh nor do I bother. But I feel sorry for myself and my husband. Our debt is increasing.

Their financial conditions whether employed or not, whether getting financial support or not have effects on the resettlement process of refugees. Those who get financial support and find job seemed in better conditions with better adjustments. However, the ones who cannot reach a particular economic situation are reported more depressive feelings and hardness during their adaptation processes.

#### **4.2.3.7. Understanding Language**

Knowing or learning the language of the host country is a significant part of the integration process. Some of the interviewees mentioned that after they learn the language or at least after understanding some of the words, they become to feel themselves better and their communication with other people become easier:

Learning language also helped me a lot. Before knowing the language, I was not understanding what people were talking about, and I was feeling bad. But after learning the language, Alhamdulillah, life became very easy for me.

It was very easy after I learned Turkish. My life became easy in the sense of communication with both people in my workplace and with other people. For example, when I speak Arabic and want water, they were not understanding me. They were not understanding what I want. After I learned Turkish, I began to be able to express what I wanted in Turkish. Also, in business too. I started to understand what they told me more easily.

First of all, I had difficulties because I was not knowing the language. Later, I learned the language, I found a job.

Knowing the language seems as one of the factors that ease the interviewees' adaptation process while not knowing the language causes some difficulties in the refugees' daily lives.

#### **4.2.3.8. Getting Citizenship**

Getting citizenship appeared as one of the most significant factors that affect refugees' process of adjustment. Once they get the citizenships, refugees are able to reach labor market easily and employed. Refugees reported that after they get citizenships, they

can find a job easier and also if they can speak the Turkish language well, they may introduce themselves as Turk and accepted. Employers mostly prefer to work with Turks and being Syrian means working for longer hours without employment insurance. However, Turks work with employment insurance since employers do not want to do employment insurance for Syrian refugees because it takes time and requires effort.

Additionally, Syrian refugees who become a Turkish citizen can access other rights that Turks had such as buying a house. Syrian refugees stated that they do not plan to return to Syria and want to stay in Turkey, therefore, they had a desire to become a Turkish citizen. Also getting citizenship is associated with accessing education and other social and economic resources easier than Syrian refugees can:

I want to get citizenship. Like I said, I want to do my dream job. My life will be better if I get the citizenship. Maybe I'll buy a house in Turkey. I even have a house in Syria. Maybe, I will sell the house in Syria and buy a house here.

One of the refugees reported that after she got Turkish citizenships, she became to feel herself better because of being less exposed to acts of discrimination:

There were things that made me feel bad. But now I have got Turkish citizenship, and now I there is not something that makes me feel bad. Previously, wherever I go, Turks were telling me that “You are Syrian, we do not like Syrians. Why do you not go to your country? Why did you leave your country, why do not you fight?”

#### **4.3. Future for Syrians in Turkey**

Majority of our participants considered themselves as permanently settled in Turkey. If the interviewees were passing good resettlement processes in Turkey (master the language, get an education, recover economically, etc.), they identified better future plans in Turkey. Their future plans in Turkey includes; working, getting citizenship, marrying and educating their children here.

The most mentioned sub-theme was getting citizenships. All the participants mentioned their strong desire to be a citizen of Turkey. Getting citizenships associated

with better life opportunities, a way for higher socio-economic status and/or better future:

I just want my husband to work in a place that he is trained. I want my children to go to school and I want to work. I want to be a Turkish citizen. I want a change in the conditions in which we live.

Sometimes I want to get Turkish citizenship and stay here. I want my kids to stay here.

I want to get citizenship. My life will change if I become a Turkish citizen. I want to complete my education. I want to work.

I want to be Turkish citizen. Like I said, I want to do my dream job. My life will be better on this count. Maybe I'll buy a house in Turkey. I even have a house in Syria. Maybe I will sell my house in Syria and buy a house here. I'm always wanting to be better. I always want to advance in the career.

One out of six interviewees mentioned that he/she would like to marry and start a new family in Turkey:

I want to get married and get citizenship. I want my life to become easier. I feel that there will be better days in the future.

As aforementioned, interviewees also frequently mentioned their plan to work and have a better life in Turkey:

I made imports last year. I want to do this in the future. Even if we take citizenship right now, I will deal with imports. I think that.

We want to work and live here. Even if we did not have financial support, we wanted to stay here. We even have lost too many people in Syria. We do not want to return to Syria since it will remind us of these losses.

#### **4.4. Suggestions from Syrians**

Interviewees were asked whether they have any advice to give to the families who are planning to come to Turkey and for the local people. Participants mainly mentioned the importance of learning the language of the host country, working and not depending on other people and representing their country well.



For the newcomers, participants mostly mentioned the significance of learning Turkish and the importance of representing Syria well. Learning language is defined as one of the factors that ease their lives and increase their sense of belonging. Also, after they learn language seems paving the way for their resettlement process. Refugees suggest other Syrians come to Turkey to feel safe.

First of all, I'd advise them to learn the language. As soon as they come, they should begin to learn Turkish. Despite living for 4-5 years in Turkey, there are people who did not learn a word of Turkish. If they do not learn Turkish, they will not get used to here. They will not feel like they belong in Turkey. They will not be able to talk with other people. First, they need to learn Turkish and to accept this country. You accommodate yourself easier when you learn the language. You're getting used to the country faster. Those who do not learn the language, have a lot of difficulties.

The most important thing is to learn the language. This is the advice that I will definitely give them if they ask me.

Participants advised that the newcomers should work hard and not depend on others for maintaining their lives.

First of all, I would recommend them to work and not remain unemployed. I told them to be respectful and to get on with.

If someone comes from Syria, I would have told him not to depend on anyone, just to stand on his own feet. And I'm disgusted when I see the Syrians begging on the street. Because there are associations and institutions that help us. They can work.

Representing their own country well is important and refugees wanted the newcomers to be exemplary individuals in both public and private part of their lives.

I would tell them not to harm the houses they live in. I would tell them to pay their rent and bills on time. These are very influential on the views of Syria.

When they get to the bus they should not show other people that "Look, I am from Syria and see what fancy things I wear". They should be respectful while talking to other people. They should indicate that the Syrians are actually respectful and respectable people.

Most importantly, I will tell him to wait for his turn wherever he was going. Certainly, his turn will come. If he does not wait for his turn, his turn may not

come. I will tell him to be polite. The vast majority of the Syrians are creating a bad image for the Syrians. For this reason, the Turks do not like the Syrians.

I would tell Syrian people to represent Syria well. When I communicate with you as a Syrian, I represent my country. Men are not all alike, but you should see Syria while looking at me.

Refugees were also asked whether they have any advice to give to local people. All the interviewees told that Turkish people should not treat all Syrians same. They mentioned that there are both good and bad people and all the Syrians are not alike. Participants also recommended that the Turkish people should empathize with Syrians and try to understand what they were going through.

They should not accept things they do not know as they are before they investigate them. They should comment after they learn who the Syrians are, how their lives are. They should not forget that the Syrians who are in Turkey mostly came from the villages of Syria where there was war. People living in Ankara and those living in the village are not same. The conversations are even changing. I would tell the Turks to keep it in mind. I would say that Syrians living here do not represent all the Syrians, they are the ones who live in the village. The people living in the village all around the world are far from civilization and unaware of the lives of other places. And we have not come here to travel, we fled out of the war.

I would tell the Turks to themselves as if they lived in the war. Because you cannot understand without putting yourself in the place of others. They should open the news, and not just look at the news, they should search. They should have more information. They just do not trust second-hand information. They should think about what we lived through and what happened to us. They should have more information about us.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The goal of this research was to provide a broader understanding of the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees with respect to their strengths and assets as well as their struggles. The factors hinder, and the ones ease the process of adjustment of seven Syrian adult refugees were observed. Gender-specific issues and roles of cultural practices influencing refugees' resettlement processes were elaborated. A total of seven refugees, three males, and four females, were interviewed and the content analysis of the data was completed in a qualitative data analysis program. Participants' pre-migration experiences, resettlement experiences and the role of culture and gender during their adjustment process were examined. Results of this study reveal that this group of Syrian refugees was exposed to traumatic experiences such as death of significant ones, loss of status and face with persecution and systematic violence and lack of safety etc. before their migration process and during the asylum-seeking period. Additionally, interviewees regarded support received from both family members and local people as a helpful resource during their resettlement process. Furthermore, findings indicated that Syrian refugees face demands regarding employment, mastering the language and discrimination. Further findings revealed that poor access to resources results in distress on psychological well-being while on the other hand an increased access to fundamental resources described as a protective factor and result in reduced distress in the resettlement period. Further examination of the results was presented below.

### **5.1. Discussion of The Main Findings**

Participants of this study were able to identify critical themes linked with their resettlement process along with the specifications of their experiences of pre-migration, transition and post-migration periods. The emerging issues which foster well-being and facilitate the process of adjustment and/or the ones that hinder the adjustment process were consistent with resettlement experiences that have been identified in other refugee communities.

Pre-migration traumatic experiences were common among Syrian refugees. Majority of the participants described at least two traumatic events earlier to fleeing their motherland. Experiences of Syrian refugees in Syria and throughout their migration comprises suffering, torture, separation from loved ones, death of loved ones, fear to lose their own lives, unexpected and involuntary nature of departure from their home country, face with imprisonment, terrorized, systematic violence, and fear of not going to be able to reach a safe place. This finding is in accordance with other studies (Bemak & Chung, 2017; Straiton et al., 2016; Tribe, 2017; Turrini et al., 2002) which reported experiences of internal unrest, cruelty, human rights abuses, fear of being persecuted for some reasons, loss of family, race, religion, nationality political opinion and repression. The result of the current study pointed out that the most significant factor affected refugees' decision to flee is a menace to personal security and safety. Torture, fear of persecution and systematic violence endanger refugees' personal safety and refugees escape from their home country for the expectation to reach a safe place. This finding is in accordance with Keyes (2000) and Harris (2003) research which also asserted that witnessing torture, the death of loved ones, bombardments and additional traumatic situations that threaten individuals' safety forced refugees to flee from their homeland to unknown destinations. Participants of this study stated that being uncertain about their destination sometimes shaken their beliefs that they will arrive at a safe place and make them feel bad about themselves. This explanation is also confirmed by Bernak and Chung's (2015) study which reported that the being uncertain about their destination also affects refugees' psychological and physical wellbeing and threat their sense of safety. Before taking

the decision to migrate, refugees thought about their alternatives and compare each country with each other. Among four neighboring countries (Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon), refugees viewed Turkey as the best option because of the financial and social benefits it possesses over other countries. Besides, refugees' decision to migrate is not taken in isolation and they get information from other people who were mainly their relatives that successfully relocated in Turkey. These explanations are in accordance with Davenport et al.'s (2003) study which argued that refugees prefer to flee to feel more secure and for the expectation that their circumstances will be better. Davenport et al., (2003) also argued that refugees consulted with other people who encounter similar conditions and successfully resettled.

Following their arriving at the host country, refugees detailed about the things that make life harder and the ones that facilitate their resettlement processes. Additionally, this group of refugees was not involved in any social activities or master the language. Not knowing and/or understanding the host country's language made refugees feel isolated and impotent which are also consistent with Ascher (1985), Beiser and Hou, (2000), and McBrien (2005). Numerous studies have proved that refugees feel powerless and in a disadvantaged situation because of communication barriers (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010).

The results of the current study showed that refugees had difficulties in finding employment. The ones who were employed exposed to discriminative attitudes of the employers such as loading with a heavy workload, receiving lower wages than locals and not paid fully which caused financial stress on them. The findings are also consistent with Lindencrona et al.'s (2008) study and other studies (Bogic et al., 2015; Philpot & Tipping, 2012; Simich et al., (2006) results which indicate that social and economic strains such as employment status, financial stress and lack of social support affect psychosocial health of refugees. The results of the current study indicated that refugees grieve for the loss of their family support and socio-economic status. The ones who live in worse economic conditions in Turkey reported a wish to return back to their past welfare level and revealed more distressed responses than the ones who are satisfied with their lives in Turkey. This is also consistent with Porter and

Haslam's (2005) study which results show that as the difference between pre-migration and post-migration resources increase the mental health of refugees also will be influenced more from the resettlement stressors.

A group of refugees reported that they are away from their family members, neither receive financial support nor have a job, feel isolated and more pessimistic in Turkey. Study results show that poor social support is critical for maintaining psychosocial health during the adjustment process. Refugees who receive no assistance reported more depressive feelings than the ones who get support, which is also consistent with King et al., (1998), and Ozbay et al., (2008). Refugees value family cohesion and support greatly, therefore, the individuals who lack family support mentioned more about the hardships they were undergoing during their process of adjustment. These explanations are in accordance with Simich et al., (2005) and Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., (2006) study results which show that individuals who lack social support experience increased stress, feel lonely, and isolated.

Discriminative attitudes were other factor impede successful adjustment of refugees and create hardships. Results of this study pointed out that all the Syrian refugees interviewed mentioned their experiences of different forms of discrimination at work or public spaces which caused feelings of discomfort and sadness. Refugees confronted with discriminative attitudes of their neighbors or the homeowners while they were looking for a place to live in. Homeowners do not want to rent their houses to refugees and even they rent, refugees' Turk neighbors avoid speaking and communicating with refugees. Research results also showed that discrimination is negatively associated with social adaptation and associated with anxiety, PTSD, and depression (Montgomery & Foldspang, 2007). This finding is in accordance with Pernice and Brook's (1996) study which indicated that experiencing discrimination influenced the psychological well-being of refugees and increase the risk of anxiety and depression. Several studies reported that post-migration stressors such as weak social network, language barriers, unemployment and discrimination make refugees vulnerable to PTSD, depression and anxiety (Turrini et al., 2017; Porter & Haslam, 2005; El-Awad et al., 2017; Kira, Shuwiekh, Rice, Al Ibraheem & Aljakoub, 2017;

Straiton et al., 2016). Experiencing prejudice found as a source of stress for interviewees of the present study since they feel unwelcome in a new country and are not accepted and treated as equals. Findings of the current study show that refugees feel that they are treated as strangers who will not stay in Turkey permanently. This explanation is also supported by Ryan, Benson, and Dooley's (2008) study that analyzed predictors of distress among refugees.

Results of the current study indicated that refugees experience multiple losses that affect their psychosocial well-being and resettlement process. Refugees grief for their losses, feel depressed and anxious when they remember their losses. Refugees' worst traumatic experience includes the death of significant others in unnatural ways and suddenly. Refugees experienced the loss of their family members, friends or people that are close to them, loss of their social ties and material good. The results of the study showed that, even after years, this group of refugees were constantly thinking about their past life in their homeland and remember their losses which make them feel sorry, affect their well-being, and hamper their process of adjustment. This finding is consistent with Hollifield et al., (2002), Ringold, (2005), and Rumbaut (1991).

Some of the interviewees described themselves happy, relieved and safe in Turkey while some of the participants mentioned sadness and loneliness. The findings of the current study show that knowing they reached to a safe place relieved refugees, which is also consistent with Tribe (2002). Additionally, refugees who have their family members with them, are employed and know the language shows better psychosocial adjustment outcomes which are also consistent with the Roizblatt and Pilowsky's (1996) study which stated that not knowing the language of the country, losing their social network are some of the challenges that refugees had to deal with. Similarly, Schweitzer et al.'s (2006) study findings indicate that psychosocial responses such as social support and language can both increase the vulnerability to mental health difficulties or protect the individual from the adverse effects of traumatic experiences. Researches have suggested that social supports and safety nets are important factors

in fostering resilience and facilitate the resettlement process (Kaplan et al., 1996; King et al., 1998; Lin, et al., 1979; Ozbay et al., 2008; Thompson, 2015).

Refugees classified social and financial support as protective factors during their resettlement processes. Moreover, refugees with poor access to resources (education, job, financial aid, home etc.) stated more distress in their lives while the ones who have high access to key resources express positive psychological state during their resettlement period. The findings of this study show that receiving social and financial support acts as helpful resources during their resettlement processes. Refugees who were able to receive financial assistance reported faster recovery process and more positive feelings than the others who were not receiving financial aid. These findings are consistent with Lin et al., (1979), Ozbay et al., (2008), and Southwick, et al., (2005) and Simich et al., (2003) which suggested that support from the environment buffer the effects of stress and help refugees to cope with the migration stress. Moreover, the findings of the current study suggest that social support from local people reduced the distress among refugees. Similarly, some researchers pointed to similar results (Lin et al., 1979; Southwick et al., 2005). Findings of the Birman and Tran's (2008) study indicated that social support from host culture network members is significant for reduced distress.

Further results of the current study indicated that refugees who are employed and master language adjust better and express more positive feelings than the ones who cannot speak Turkish and receive financial assistance which is also consistent with Philpot and Tipping (2012). Refugees who employed reported economic and personal recovery which help them to live in better conditions. The results of this study also showed that refugees who master the language become to feel themselves better and learning language help them to acquire other resources. Refugees who learn the language reported that they became able to communicate with locals, form new social networks and find employment easier. This explanation is also supported by Khawaja et al.,'s (2008) and Vojvoda et al.,'s (2008) studies which indicated that mastering the language help refugees to participate in social life, form new social networks which decrease their sense of isolation and loneliness and find employment. Mastery of the



host country's language appeared as a significant factor for successful adjustment process.

Apart from the literature, research results show that getting citizenship is one of the significant factors that ease the adjustment process for refugees. Refugees who become Turkish citizen were also accessed to labor market more easily and define themselves as Turks which seems that giving them a new status in society. Refugees who get citizenships were employed easier than the ones who cannot get citizenship and introduce themselves as Turks rather than Syrians. This new status provided refugees with the opportunity to become more integrated into the host society and feel part of it.

Female and male refugees were subjected to traumatic experiences. Both groups were exposed to violence and loss of family members. The results of this study found that culturally, male refugees struggled with the issue of bringing their families from their country to Turkey. Moreover, during their resettlement processes, male refugees had to earn the whole family's keep. On the other hand, female refugees are dependent on male refugees and have limited access to social life. Interviewees reported that they can go out and participate in social activities only if their husbands or fathers are allowing them. Because of the gender roles and cultural practices, women had very limited mobility, lack equal representation in social life and cannot go outside without the permission of a man. This explanation is also supported by Porter and Haslam's (2005) and Piccinelli and Wilkinson's (2000) studies which reported that the prevalence of developing mental health outcomes is higher in females than males because of lack of equal representation. Female refugees reported that males at least go out and communicate with other people on the job, while females live between four walls with limited social life. Therefore, females had more difficulties in mastering a new language and forming new social networks. Females who are dependent on their husbands reported more depressive feelings and cannot adjust to the host country as smooth as other females who go outside more often and/or work.

When it comes to the strengths and assets of Syrians, the interviewed refugees defined four areas of strengths of the Syrian community. First, Syrians had a strong sense of

family cohesion and identified their parents and family as significant sources of social support. Refugees who had their family members with them reported more feelings of relief and loneliness in Turkey than others who leave their family in Syria and lack their support. This finding is supported by many researches which stated that deterioration of family cohesion affects the social networks that are supposed to provide safety and recovery for refugees (De Haene et al., 2010; Morina et al., 2016) Result of this study indicated that refugees who had heir family members near to them reported more positive feelings. Families and relatives were sources of support, especially in hard times. Secondly, despite being exposed to several traumatic events and lose almost everything they had, these group of refugees still had hope for the future which serves them as a source of positivity and facilitates their adjustment process. Research results indicated that refugees have expectations for a better future and mentioned about creating a better future for their families. This result is consistent with Berman, Ford-Gilboe, Moutrey, and Cekic's (2016) study with seven Bosnian refugee children, which indicated that despite the hardships they were experienced, refugee children had strength and courage about the hopes for future. In another study, Goodman, (2004) stated that hoping for and planning for the future help refugees to survive and endure the difficulties that they were experiencing. Thirdly, the similarity between Syrian and Turkish culture make refugees to like Turkey and may help them to feel more integrated rather than being alienated. Similarity of the cultures helps refugees to adjust easier to the country. Lastly, refugee women also reported about the difference in their lives both in Turkey and Syria. Females have relatively more freedom in Turkey and when they were provided with that freedom some use it to stay on their own feet and to become stronger than before which provide them with a sense of empowerment.

To sum up, this study explored the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey. The main goal was to understand the factors that ease and hinder the resettlement process for refugees and to elaborate on gender-specific issues impacting refugees' adjustment process. In this study, a qualitative approach is used to explore the resettlement experiences of refugees in detail. Participants of this study reported their experiences during their migration process. Answers to the questions of how

refugees decide to migrate and what factors affect their decisions, what they lived through their flight process were provided. Before taking the decision to migrate interviewees displaced within borders of their country to provide their personal security and safety against the war. During their pre-migration processes, refugees were exposed to death risk several times and took some security measures such as staying in separate homes to keep themselves safe. All of the participants lost their homes and freedom, witnessed torture and lost their loved ones because of the ongoing conflicts. Some of them were injured and some were faced with persecution. Worsened economic conditions and not being able to fulfill their needs coupled with the reasons mentioned above were the main factors that forced them to cross the borders of their homeland to unknown destinations. Syrian refugees preferred to migrate to Turkey for the expectation of better economic and social conditions and similarity of the cultures.

After coming to a new country, all reported the difficulties they faced and the factors that ease their adaptation process. Some of the participants reported more hardships during their adaptation to a new country while the others reported that they are hopeful. Participants of this study reported their socio-economic hardships and psychosocial issues during their process of adjustment. Language difficulties, unemployment, and insufficient housing conditions, and not being able to continue their education were defined as socio-economic challenges in the host country. Disruption of family cohesion, being exposed to acts of discrimination, and loss of significant ones, social networks, and their socio-economic status were defined as psychosocial issues that hinder refugees' adjustment process. Being female is found as one of the factors that increase the vulnerability for mental health since culturally, female interviewees reported that they are dependent to a male during their lives and has not equal representation both in and outside of their families. On the other hand, the findings of this study showed that receiving social and financial support, arriving at a safe place, being employed and finding housing are helpful factors that ease refugees' adjustment processes in Turkey. Refugees' strengths and assets were also defined. Strong family ties and social networks, having hope for the future, similarity of the cultures and relative freedom for Syrian women were strengths of this

population. The results of this study showed that Syrian refugees have wishes to work, get citizenship and stay in Turkey in the future. Suggestions for the Syrian refugees both for the newcomers and locals were also provided. The most recurrent theme for the newcomers was the importance of learning the host country's language and not depending on others to sustain their lives. Locals were advised to show empathy towards refugees and their compelling living conditions.

This study contributes to a better understanding of resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Syrian refugees can be supported by the recognition of their resources and resiliency. One of the biggest strengths of this population is social support and the dense social networks they have and their hope for the future. Intervention programs can be built upon the assets and strengths of the Syrian community, thus, helping them to stay resilient. Apart from their strengths, Syrian refugees have some needs. Especially, the language barrier seemed significant for Syrian refugees. After learning the language, Syrians become more resilient and can reach and use the information they need more easily. It is also important to understand the positive effect of knowing the language during the adjustment process. Refugees who learn the language seems to adjust better and interacting more with the society. Mastering the language of the host country helped some of them to access the education, finding jobs and even getting citizenships. The ones who learn the language seems gained confidence and reach the information they needed easily, build up social networks and made them stronger in terms of psychosocial health. It would also be significant to find better ways to create more interaction between Turkish people and Syrian refugees.

A significant contribution of this study has lied in its methodology and findings. Instead of focusing on the needs of refugees which shows them as insufficient and make them dependent on help that is coming from outside, this study helped us to understand their strengths and treasures that they are carrying. Findings of this study helped to move away from the needs-based model towards the strength-based model. Support and strengths that the refugees carry with them are defined. Revealing these treasures also with the help of understanding of the effect of gender roles on their

adjustment process, an intervention model that aim to strength the women and increase the men' awareness for the rights of women can be developed. This study also utilized a qualitative methodology, which is suited for understanding refugees' experiences, thoughts, and views during their resettlement process. Thus, refugees find an opportunity to express their resources and experiences during their resettlement and also during pre-migration and transition process which provided a better understanding of experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Also, the effect of pre-migration and transition experiences on refugees' current lives is studied.

### **5.3. Limitations**

Several limitations of this study need to be noted. Since the difficulty experienced in remembering the past after elapsed time; there can be deficiencies during the recall process or some interpretation errors because of the retrospective feature of this study. Interviewing with more than one individual helped the researcher to understand refugees' past experiences in detail and thus, decrease the errors that may result because of the interpretation issues.

Furthermore, the generalization of the findings to the Syrian refugee population needs to be considered since this study conducted with small sample size and the sample was also heterogeneous in terms of gender, age, employment, socioeconomic and marital status, education level, and time spent in Turkey. Moreover, 57 percent of the participants were female therefore an equitable distribution to both sexes cannot be achieved. the researcher mostly recruited refugees at a high school level, around the 20s and low socioeconomic status.

### **5.4. Implications and Suggestions for Future Studies**

Future studies with larger sample size can find the opportunity to examine specific groups of refugees in more detail and also can explore whether there are differences resulting from these factors in terms of resilience and adopt a longitudinal methodology includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. Gender-specific factors and cultural practices hinder and foster the adjustment processes with age,

marital status and education level features can be examined for a better understanding of the developmental trajectories. These studies will be helpful in better understanding of resilience and also the results of these studies can be utilized to enhance the effectiveness of the programs aimed at increasing the positive adaptation of refugees. Moreover, research results showed that getting citizenship has a significant impact on the adjustment process of refugees and seem as one of the factors that ease refugees process of adaptation. As mentioned earlier, the lack of communication and interaction between Syrian refugees and Turkish people feed the prejudices among the populations. Another research could be conducted participants belong to both societies for understanding the factors that prevent the societies from interacting and the factors that promote interaction.

These findings have significant implications for policy makers and NGOs. This research could give an idea to both the lawmakers and the NGOs about the ways to promote interaction between different groups and improve the lives of refugees and local people. The results of this study showed that financial assistance and employment directly impact the quality of life of refugees and their mental health. Interventions should be carefully designed to provide financial and psychosocial support to refugees who need to. Moreover, identification of both risk and protective factors may contribute to greater awareness of refugees' mental health for professionals. Refugees reported that they had limited or no opportunity to connect with Turkish people due to language difficulties, acts of discrimination and gender roles. In this study, refugees demonstrated a desire to form relationships with locals which may have a positive impact on their adjustment process. Refugees who tried to resettle in communities with a negative attitude toward refugees may have difficulties in integrating into the community and forming relationships with community members. Refugee Community Organizations and NGOs that serve refugees can promote interaction that helps to build social bridges between refugees and locals. Moreover, receiving community members can be educated about the experiences and realities of refugees in their home country and in their resettlement process. The community may fear and distrust to refugees because of lack of knowledge and

understanding of refugees' experiences. Educating the community may increase understanding and decrease the acts of discrimination against refugees.

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## APPENDICES

### A. MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
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11 MAYIS 2018

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgili: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof. Dr. Özgür Erdur BAKLIR

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız yüksek lisans öğrencisi Hilal ALTUNAY'ın "Identifying Needs, Struggles, Sources and Strengths of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Findings from A Community-Based Participatory Research" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay 2018-EGT-058 protokol numarası ile 11.05.2018 - 30.12.2018 tarihleri arasında geçerli olmak üzere verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

  
Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN

Başkan V

  
Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL

Üye

  
Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR


Üye

  
Doç. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI

Üye

  
Doç. Dr. Zena ÇITAK

Üye

  
Doç. Dr. Emre SFLÇUK

Üye

  
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Pınar KAYGAN

Üye

## **B. LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR PARTICIPANTS**

### **DEBRIEFING FORM**

This study a qualitative study which is conducted by Hilal Altunay Department of Guidance and Psychological Counselling, METU. This study aims to learn about the factors fosters resilience, the ones hinder adjustment and thereby exacerbate mental health problems of the participants. The purpose of this study is therefore to explore the effect of sociocultural factors impacting mental health of forcibly displaced Syrian refugees and to identify needs, struggles, sources and strengths of the Syrians in Turkey via using the community-based participatory research (CBPR) model with the conceptual framework of Assets Mapping Approach. Literature reports some community strengths and resources which increase resilience of refugees. Betancourt et al. (2015) stated that despite resettlement challenges religion, community support networks and peer support and healthy family communication have positive impact on the refugees' functioning. These resources make it possible for refugees to acquire other resources in different areas and thus decrease risk for mental health problems. For instance, religious faith may help an individual to be more optimistic and thus being more social, active and open to new experiences. Religious and cultural practices order the daily lives of refugees in a way that these practices help refugees to cope with stress. Lightfoot, Blevins, Lum, and Dube (2016) indicated that religious and cultural practices, culture of sharing and interconnectedness are assets of Somali refugee communities. Sharing their resources (e.g. food, money, information, experience and frequently visiting each other which is described as interconnectedness seems to promote the well-being of refugees. Based on the literature, it is expected to identify the social and cultural practices affect people's interpretations of events, may increase resilience or on the contrary may exacerbate the indication of symptoms.

It is aimed that the preliminary data from this study will be obtained at the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2018. These data will be utilized only for research purposes. For further information, about the study and its results, you can refer to the following names. We would like to thank you for participating in this study.

Hilal Altunay from the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counselling (Tel: +90 537 894 6053; E-mail: [hilal.altunay@metu.edu.tr](mailto:hilal.altunay@metu.edu.tr)).

## C. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This is a qualitative study which is conducted by Hilal Altunay Department of Guidance and Psychological Counselling, METU. The aim of the study is to learn about the factors fosters resilience, the ones hinder adjustment and thereby exacerbate mental health problems of the participants. Participation in the study is on a voluntary basis. No personal identification information is required during the interview. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and evaluated only by the researcher; the obtained data will be used for scientific purposes.

The interview does not contain questions that may cause discomfort in the participants. However, during participation, for any reason, if you feel uncomfortable, you are free to quit at any time. In such a case, it will be sufficient to tell the person conducting the interview (i.e., data collector) that you do not want to complete the interview.

After the interview ends, your questions related to the study will be answered. We would like to thank you in advance for your participation in this study. For further information about the study, you can contact Hilal Altunay from the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counselling (Tel: +90 537 894 6053; E-mail: [hilal.altunay@metu.edu.tr](mailto:hilal.altunay@metu.edu.tr)).

***I am participating in this study totally on my own will and am aware that I can quit participating at any time I want/ I give my consent for the use of the information I provide for scientific purposes.*** (Please return this form to the interviewer after you have filled it in and signed it).

Name Surname

Date

Signature

----/----/-----

## D. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### ---INTERVIEW GUIDE---

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#### Introduction

---

The purpose of this study is to learn more about refugees who move to Turkey from Syria. I am interested in your migration process. I am especially going to ask you questions about how you felt when you first moved here, what things helped you and what things were not so helpful.

I will keep whatever you tell me confidential. That means I will not tell anyone else what you said to me. I am not going to ask you any personal questions. Even if I am, your identity will not be revealed. If you do not want to answer any questions, you do not have to. If you want to stop at any time, we will, and you will not be in any trouble because of it. If you want, I will throw out anything you do not want me to use. I will be talking to a few refugees and when I write this up into a report, I will combine all your answers, so it sounds like one person talking.

I would like to tape this interview so that I do not forget anything you say. No one else will ever hear it. Sometimes I might write some things down too. You can look at them after we are done if you want to.

Do you understand all of this? Do you have any questions? Do you still want to be interviewed?

---

#### The Interview

---

**(The questions must be considered just advisory, and may be changed, mixed and reformulated as the conversation is going on.)**

***Let's get started. First, let's test the equipment to make sure it is working.***

**Close-ended**

1. What is your age?
2. What is your sex/gender?
3. What is your marital status?
4. Do you have children?
5. What is your education level?
6. What is your occupation?
7. How long has it been since your arrival to the Turkey?

8. What region in Syria are you from?
9. With whom do you live in Turkey?

### **Background**

1. To start out, I would like you to think about your migration process. Tell me about your experiences before, during and after migration.
  - a. What have you gone through?
  - b. Can you tell me how you feel about being in a new country?
2. Is there any special memory you have about this process?
  - a. When you think about that memory how you are feeling?
3. I would like to know who the important people in your life are right now.
  - a. Are your friends from your country? Your neighborhood? Your church/mosque? What are the functions of these people in your life? How do they help you?

### **Past Experiences**

1. Describe the difficulties you had when you traveled to the Turkey.
2. Remember at the beginning of our interview, I said that I am interested in what helps you when you first move to a new country. Could you tell about a particular the biggest difficulty you have experienced during that process?
  - a. What was your psychological difficulties/your emotions during that process?
  - b. How you deal with the situation?
  - c. What did you say yourself or do to make things easier for you?
  - d. Can you describe to me what was important for you in this process?
  - e. Were there specific services, persons, or situations that help you coping with that situation?
3. If applicable, describe the experiences you had in any refugee camps.
  - a. What was your psychological difficulties/your emotions during that process?
  - b. What did you say yourself or do to make things easier for you?
  - c. Can you describe to me what was important for you in this process?
  - d. Were there specific services, persons, or situations that help you coping with that situation?

### **Present Experiences**

1. Now I would like you to think about the present. Can you describe yourself today?
  - a. Is it different from one year ago? Or when you came to Turkey?
  - b. What is the difference?
2. What are some difficulties you have in the Turkey?
  - a. What are some challenges you are facing right now?
  - b. What are some of the stressors you currently have in your life?
3. How is life different in the Turkey versus life in your home country?
4. How do you stay positive?
5. Could you tell a little bit about your involvement with any psychosocial services?
  - a. What was helpful in that psychosocial service?
  - b. What can be done to make psychosocial intervention more useful?
6. What are some positive experiences that came as a result of being a refugee?
  - a. If any, could you relate those experiences to your daily practices and/or beliefs?

### **Questions about Self**

1. Can you please describe your day? What are some things that you usually do?  
Probe: What does your usual day look like?
2. What makes you happy?
  - i. What made the good stuff good?
  - ii. What do you do then?
3. What makes you feel bad?
  - i. What do you do then?
  - ii. What would have helped with the hard stuff?
4. What does it mean for you to be women/ men refugee?

### **Questions about Future**

1. What wishes do you have for the future?
  - a. Can you describe for me how you think you can fulfil your wishes?
2. If you knew another family was moving to Turkey from your home country, what would you tell them to make life easier?

- a. What would you want the society to do for them?
3. Would you please give some advices to Turkish people about how to support refugees in similar situations as yours?

**Wrapping up**

1. We are almost done now. *Summarize the interview here.* You have told me a lot about your experiences moving to Turkey. Is there anything else you can think of?
2. We are at the end of our interview. Is there anything you would like to ask me?

***Thank you so much for letting me interview you.***



## E. THE CODEBOOK

### I-Immigration experiences of Syrians (Pre-migration)

- 1-How do they decide? Why Turkey?
- 2-How do they emigrated?
- 3-How long they have been here in Turkey?

### II-Resettlement Experiences of Syrians

#### 1-Issues and Challenges in The Adjustment Process

##### A-Socio-Economic Hardships

- a) Language Difficulties
- b) Employment
- c) Living Conditions
- d) Education

##### B-Psychosocial Issues

- a) Fragmented Family
- b) Discrimination
- c) Psychological Difficulties
- d) Education
- e) Loss and Grief
  - i.Human Loss -(1-Family member 2-Friends)
  - ii. Loss of Social Ties
  - iii. Loss of Material Goods

#### 2-Strenghts and Assets of Syrians

##### A-Family Ties and Social Network

##### B-Hope for Future

##### C-Similarity of The Cultures

##### D- Relative Freedom for Syrian Women

#### 3-Factors Impacting Adjustment Process

##### A-Gender

##### B-Family and Social Networks

##### C-Understanding Language

##### D-Access to External Aids

E-Presence of Previously Settled Relatives in Turkey

F- Feel Accepted

III-Future for Syrians in Turkey

IV- Suggestions from Syrians

A-For Syrians

B-For Turks

## F: ATLAS.TI PROCEDURE SCREEN SHOT

The screenshot displays the ATLAS.TI software interface. The main window shows a document titled "Thesis — Edited" with a search bar containing "kaçak". The document text is in Turkish and discusses the experiences of refugees during the war. The interface includes a menu bar with options like "Quotation from Selection", "Add Coding", "Code In Vivo", and "Quick Coding". Below the menu bar, there are tabs for "Documents", "Quotations", "Codes", and "Memos". The left sidebar shows a tree view of the document structure, including "Documents (7)" and "Codes (36)". The codes are organized into a hierarchy, with "1-issues and Challenges in the adj..." being the selected code. The right sidebar shows a list of codes with their corresponding text snippets. The main text area contains the following text:

yaşamadık. Savaşın henüz çok fazla ilerlemediği bir zamanda çıktık. Biz 4 yıl önce hatta 5 olmak üzere çıktık. Biz bombalanma seslerini duyuyorduk, çok korkuyorduk. Ama bombaları görmedik. Yakınlarımızdan hayatlarını kaybedenler oldu. Amcamın ve halamın oğulları hayatını kaybettiler. Her ikisi aynı gün hayatlarını kaybettiler.

**Interviewer:** Nasıl oldu?

**Interviewee:** Sokaktalardı. Uçaktan üzerlerine atılan bomba sebebiyle hayatlarını kaybettiler. Allah rahmet eylesin. Biz savaşı öyle çok görmedik ama psikolojik olarak çok kötüydük, hiç iyi değildik. Amcam bizden 1 buçuk yıl önce Türkiye'ye gelmişti. Amcam bize burada çalışabileceğimizi ve gelirse hayatımızı burada sürdürebileceğimizi söyledi. Geldik. Suriye'de her şeyimizi bırakıp geldik. Sadece üzerimizdeki kıyafetlerimiz vardı.

**Interviewer:** Kaçak yollarla mı giriş yaptınız?

**Interviewee:** Tabii. Doğal olarak kaçak geldik. Amcamın oğlu geldi ve bizi kaçırdı. Pasaport çıkartamıyorduk biz. O dönemde aynı zamanda DAESH vardı. Biz çıktığımızda vardı ama henüz o kadar aktif değildi. Suriye'de hiç iş yoktu. Savaş başladığında kimse çalışmamaya başladı. Sadece veddiğimiz aıdalar kalmıstı. Elektrik ve suyu belirdi

## G. TURKISH SUMMARY /TÜRKÇE ÖZET

### TÜRKİYE'DE BULUNAN SURİYELİ MÜLTECİLERİN UYUM DENEYİMLERİ: TOPLUMA DAYALI KATILIMCI ARAŞTIRMA BULGULARI

Göç, bir bireylerin yaşamlarını sürdürebilmek amacıyla buldukları bölgeden ayrılarak başka bir yerleşim yerine ya da ülkeye gitmeleri olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Bailey, 2010). İnsan hakları ihlalleri, zulümler, şiddet, kıtlık ve çatışmalar, insanları kendi menşe ülkelerinin sınırları dahilinde veya sınırları dışında yer değiştirmelerini zorunlu kılmıştır. Uluslararası Göç Örgütü'nün 2005 Dünya Göç raporuna göre, bir ülkenin ekonomik, siyasi, sosyal, dini, çevresel ve kültürel koşulları kişilerin göç etme kararlarında önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu faktörler bireyler için hem itici hem çekici faktörler olabilmektedir. itici faktörler (savaşlar, kıtlık, afetler vs.) insanları evlerinden çıkmaya iten güçlerdir. Bu faktörler insanların hayatlarını zorlaştırarak bireylerin daha iyi yaşam koşulları için evlerinden çıkmasına zorlamaktadır. Öte yandan, çekici faktörler ise (daha iyi yaşam koşulları, daha iyi iş fırsatları, vb.) insanları bir yerleşim yeri ya da ülkeye yerleşme konusunda etkileyen faktörlerdir. İnsanlar göç etme kararını gönüllü olarak alabilirler veya insanlar evlerinden kaçmak zorunda bırakılabilirler. Gönüllü ya da gönüllü olmayan göç süreci mültecilerin hayatlarında farklı uyum deneyimleri ile sonuçlanmaktadır. Her ikisi göç türü daha iyi yaşam koşulları amacıyla gerçekleştirilirken, zorunlu göç, insanlar için daha gönülsüz ve daha travmatiktir.

Zorunlu göç, çatışmalar, kalkınma projeleri, hem çevresel hem de kimyasal afetler ya da kıtlık nedeniyle yerinden edilen mültecilerin, sığınmacıların ya da ülke içinde yerinden edilmiş kişilerin hareketini içermektedir (FMO, 2012). Birleşmiş Milletler

Mülteciler Yüksek Komiserliği'nin (BMMYK) Haziran 2017'de yayınlanan yıllık raporuna göre, 2016 yılı sonunda dünya genelinde yerlerinden edilen mülteci sayısının yaklaşık 65,6 milyondur (UNHCR, 2017). Dünya çapındaki mültecilerin yüzde 55'ini 5,5 milyon ile Suriye, 2,5 milyon ile Afganistan ve 1,4 milyon ile Güney Sudan oluşturmaktadır (UNHCR, 2017). Mülteci nüfusundaki artışın çoğu, 2011'de başlayan Suriye çatışmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. BMMYK yüksek komiseri Filippo Grandi, Suriye'yi “zamanımızın en büyük insani ve mülteci krizi” olarak tanımlamıştır (UNHCR, n.d.). Ulusal nüfusu ile karşılaştırıldığında Suriyeliler günümüzde de en büyük zorla göç ettirilmiş nüfus olarak tanımlanmaktadır. 2017 Avrupa Komisyonu Raporu, 13 milyon Suriyeli nüfustan 6,1 milyonunun kendi ülkeleri içinde yerlerinden edilmek zorunda kaldıklarını, bunun da 4,8 milyonunun Lübnan, Ürdün, Irak, Türkiye ve Mısır gibi komşu ülkelerde güvenlik arayışında olduğunu belirtmektedir.

Göç süreci boyunca mülteciler, psikososyal refahlarını ve güvenlik duygularını bozan travmatik deneyimlere maruz kalmaktadırlar. Göç öncesi risk faktörleri ruh sağlığı sorunlarının öncüsü olabilir ve mültecilerin göç sonrası süreçleri üzerinde de önemli etkiye sahiptir. Ülkelerini terk etmeden önce mülteciler çok sayıda travmatik yaşam olayına maruz kalmış olabilirler. Aniden göç etmek zorunda kaldıklarından dolayı göç süreçlerini planlamak ya da buna hazırlanmak için hiç ya da çok az zamanları olmuş olabilir. Göç öncesi travmatik yaşam olayları (örneğin yerinden edilmenin etkisi), hayatlarında önemli kişilerin ölümü, terör veya işkenceye maruz kalma, zulümle karşılaşma, sistematik şiddet, hapis, yiyecek ve barınaktan mahrumiyet, kötü muamele, cinsel taciz ve güvenlik duygularında sarsılma gibi birden fazla travma yaşayabilirler (Bemak ve Chung, 2017). Mültecilerin travmatik deneyimleri kümülatif ve birbiriyle bağlantılı bir özelliğe sahiptir. Birçok mülteci, aile bireylerinin kaybı ve günlük yaşantılarının aksamasına sebep olan travmatik olaylar yaşarlar. Araştırmalar, travma ile psikolojik stres düzeyi arasında bir doz-etki ilişkisi bulmuş ve işkenceye maruz kalmanın artmasının özellikle travma sonrası belirtiler için akıl sağlığı sorunlarının ortaya çıkma olasılığını arttırdığı bulunmuştur (Lindencrona, Ekblad & Hauff, 2008).

Ev sahibi ÷lkeye geldikten sonra, yeni ÷lkeye uyum, m÷lteciler için önemli hale gelmektedir. Yabancı ÷lkelerde yeniden yerleşim sürecinde m÷lteciler karmaşık durumlara uyum sağlamalıdır. M÷lteciler yeniden yerleşim süreci boyunca birçok zorlukla karşı karşıya kalmaktadırlar. Çoğu araştırma, m÷ltecilerin travmatik yaşam olayları açısından yaşadıkları fiziksel sorunları ve psikolojik tepkilerini incelemektedir. Yeniden yerleşim sürecinde de m÷lteciler strese maruz kalmakta ve göç öncesi faktörlerin de m÷ltecilerin akıl sağlığı sorunları geliştirmelerinde ve yeni bir çevreye uyum ve adaptasyon süreçlerinde önemli rol oynamaktadır (Lindencrona ve ark., 2008; Philpot & Tipping, 2012). Yeniden yerleşim süreçlerinde yaşadıkları stres ve ayrımcılık, Travma Sonrası Stres Bozukluğu (TSSB) için yüksek riskle ilişkilendirilmiştir (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln ve Cabral, 2008). Ev sahibi ÷lkede geldikten sonra, m÷lteciler hayatlarında ani değişiklikler doğrultusunda göç stresi yaşamaktadırlar. Earnest, Mansi, Bayat, Earnest ve Thompson'ın (2015) çalışmasına göre, dil, sosyal aktiviteler ve sosyal desteğin başarılı bir yeniden yerleşim süreci için kritik faktörler olarak gösterilmiştir. Ayrıca, göç öncesi travmatik deneyimler ile göç sonrası zorluklar, m÷ltecilerin psikolojik iyi oluşlarını da etkilemektedir. Sack ve meslektaşları (1996), daha önceki savaş travması ile yeniden yerleştirmenin, m÷ltecilerin akıl sağlığı bozukluklarına karşı savunmasızlığını artırdığını belirtmiştir. Bu çalışma, göç öncesi travmatik deneyimler ve göç sonrası stress faktörleri ile m÷ltecilerin psikolojik iyi oluşları arasında önemli ilişkiler olduğunu gösteren Heptinstall, Sethna ve Taylor'un (2004) çalışması ile uyumludur.

Dünya çapında zorla göç ettirilen m÷ltecilerle yapılan araştırmaların büyük bir çoğunluğu m÷lteciler arasındaki ruhsal bozukluk oranlarının genel nüfus oranlarından daha yüksek olduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışmalar, TSSB, depresyon ve anksiyetenin m÷lteci nüfusu içinde en sık görülen ruh sağlığı bozuklukları olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, ağır travmatik olaylara maruz kalmak, ruh sağlığı bozukluğu geliştirmenin yüksek risklerinden biri olarak gösterilmektedir. Labys, Dreyer ve Burns (2017) ve Beiser ve Hou (2017) tarafından yapılan araştırmalar, m÷ltecilerin diğer göçmenlere göre ruhsal sağlık sorunlarının daha yüksek olduğunu ve göç sonrası stresle ilgili sıkıntı verici duygular bildirdiklerini belirtmiştir. 80.000 m÷lteci üzerinde değerlendirilen 181 çalışmanın meta analizinde, Steel ve ark. (2009), TSSB'nin

mültecilerdeki yaygınlığının yüzde 30,6 olduğunu ve depresyonun yaygınlık oranının yüzde 30,8 olduğunu bildirmiştir (Morina ve ark., 2017'de belirtildiği gibi). Bu nedenle, Suriyeli mültecilerin uyum sağlama süreçlerini karmaşıklaştıran ve kolaylaştıran faktörlerin anlaşılması önemlidir.

Var olan literatür incelendiğinde, yapılan mülteci araştırmalarının büyük bir kısmı, travmatik yaşam olayları bakımından mültecilerin fiziksel sorunlarını ve psikolojik tepkilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Mültecilerin yeni çevreye uyum sağlama süreçleri ve bu süreç esnasında uyum sağlamak için başvurdukları yollar ve kaynaklar hakkında yeterince bilgi yoktur. Bu faktörleri anlamak, mültecilerin uyum süreçlerini kolaylaştıran ve zorlaştıran faktörlerin ortaya çıkarılması ve buna uygun müdahale programlarının geliştirilmesi açısından önemlidir. Ayrıca, Türkiye'ye aileleriyle birlikte gelen yabancı uyruklu kişilerin savaş öncesinde yaşadıkları travmatik deneyimler ile baş etme yolları bulmaları, Türkiye'deki yaşama adapte olabilmek için ise ülkenin kültürüne, gelenek ve göreneklerine de uyum sağlamaları beklenmektedir. Temel ihtiyaçların karşılanmasının ardından kişilerin psikolojik sorunları ile baş etmelerine yardımcı olacak mekanizmaların sunulması ve bu hizmetleri sunan profesyonellerin ise kişilerin ihtiyaçları konusunda bilgi sahibi olması sunulacak olan hizmetin kalitesini arttıracaktır. Bu çalışma ile Türkiye'de bulunan Suriyeli mültecilerin uyum süreçlerini anlamak amacıyla aşağıdaki sorulara cevap aranmaktadır:

1. Mültecilerin göç öncesi deneyimleri nelerdir?
2. Mültecilerin göç sonrası deneyimleri nelerdir?
3. Mültecilerin uyum süreçlerini etkileyen faktörler nelerdir?
4. Mültecilerin uyum süreçlerini etkileyen kültüre özgü faktörler nelerdir?
5. Mültecilerin uyum sürecini etkileyen cinsiyete özgü faktörler nelerdir?

## **Yöntem**

### *Katılımcılar*

Bu nitel çalışma, yaşları 20 ile 33 arasında değişen, yaşlarının ortalaması 24.14 olan üçü erkek ve dördü kadın olmak üzere toplam yedi Suriyeli mülteci ile yapılan mülakatlara dayanmaktadır. Çalışmaya medeni ve sosyoekonomik statüsü gözetilmeksizin Ankara'da yaşayan, ve 2011'den sonra, Suriye savaşının başlamasının ardından Türkiye'ye gelen mülteciler katılmıştır. Katılımcılar ilkökul seviyesinde eğitilmiş kişilerden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılardan üçü bekar, dördü evliydi. Kadınlar ise 14-17 yaşları arasında evlendiklerini bildirilmiştir. Katılımcıların üçü (1 erkek, 2 kadın) çalışmadıklarını ve dördü (2 erkek, 2 kadın) iş hayatının farklı alanlarında (tercüman, terzi, pastane vb.) çalıştıklarını belirtmiştir. Katılımcıların Türkiye'deki bulunma süreleri bir ile altı arasında değişmekte ve ortalama olarak 3.2 yıldır Türkiye'de oldukları bulunmuştur. Katılımcılardan biri hariç hepsi Halep'ten geldiklerini ve bir tanesi ise Hama'dan göç ettiğini belirtmiştir. Katılımcılardan yalnızca biri Türkiye'de arkadaşları ile yaşadığını, diğerleri ise aileleriyle birlikte yaşadıklarını ifade etmiştir.

### *Araçlar ve Veri Toplama*

Bu araştırma, Topluluk Temelli Katılımcı Araştırma (TTKA) çerçevesinde yürütülmüştür. Literatür taraması tamamlandıktan sonra araştırma soruları tanımlanmış ve görüşme protokolü TTKA'da tanımlanan ortakların yardımıyla hazırlanmıştır. Ardından etik kurul izni için araştırma projesi ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'na (IAEK) sunulmuştur. Ek A'da sunulan izin, 7 Şubat - 30 Aralık 2018 tarihleri arasında geçerli olacak şekilde alınmıştır. Veri toplama prosedürü 15 Mayıs 2018'de başlamış ve aynı yılın 15 Temmuz günü sona ermiştir.

Mülakat soruları katılımcıların göç süreci hakkında dört ana alanı kapsayacak sorulardan oluşmaktaydı; (1) Geçmiş deneyimler, (2) Türkiye'de mevcut deneyimler, (3) Benlik hakkında sorular ve (4) Gelecek planları hakkında sorular. Mültecilerin geçmiş deneyimleri, mültecilerin iç savaş sırasında ve sığınmacı süreçlerinde



geçirdikleri travmalar ve zorluklar hakkında bilgi almak amacıyla sorulmuştur. Daha sonra, mevcut deneyimler ile mültecilerin yeni bir ülkeye uyum sağlarken karşılaştıkları ekonomik ve psikolojik zorluklar ve destek mekanizmaları bağlamında bilgi almak amaçlanmıştır. Kendine dair sorular, adaptasyon sürecini kolaylaştıran ve süreci engelleyen faktörleri ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamıştır. Son olarak, katılımcılara gelecek planları ve bu planları nasıl yerine getirmeyi amaçladıkları sorulmuştur.

Tüm görüşmeler araştırmacı ve görüşme yapmak konusunda eğitimli topluluk araştırmacısı aracılığıyla, katılımcıların evlerinde ya da özel bir yerde yapılmış ve yaklaşık bir saat sürmüştür. Görüşmelerin demografik kısmı yaklaşık 10 dakikada ve görüşmelerin geri kalanı yaklaşık 50 dakikada tamamlanmıştır. Tüm katılımcılar ses kaydı yapılmasına izin vermiştir, aynı zamanda araştırmacılar tarafından notlar da alınmıştır. Sorular daha önce gözden geçirilmiş dahi olsa çalışılan konunun hassas olması nedeniyle, bazı sorular katılımcıların travmatik deneyimlerini tetikleyebilir ve kendilerini kötü hissetmelerine sebep olabileceğinden alanda mültecilerle çalışan ve psikososyal destek alabilecekleri merkezlere yönlendirmelerinin yapılması planlanmıştır. Görüşmeler sırasında katılımcılar, soruların geçmiş travmatik deneyimleri hatırlatacağı ve kendilerini kötü hissetmelerine sebep olabileceği konusunda uyarılmıştır. Katılımcılardan ikisinin psikolojik destek alabilecekleri ilgili yerlere yönlendirmeleri yapılmıştır.

#### *Veri analizi*

Ses kayıtları ve notlar kullanılarak, her katılımcı için elektronik ortamda görüşmelerin yazılı formatı hazırlanmıştır. Yazıya dökülmüş görüşmeler nicel veri analiz programı Atlas.ti.'nin Mac versiyonu ile analiz edilmiştir. İçerik analizi akademik araştırmacılar tarafından yapılmıştır. Mültecilerin ev sahibi ülkede yaşam deneyimleri hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmek için metinlerden çıkan önemli parçaların her biri kodlanmıştır. Analiz boyunca kullanılan aşamalar şu şekildeydi: Her bir röportaj, uyum süreçleri ile ilgili önemli temaları keşfetmek için birden fazla kez okunmuştur. Transkriptler arasında ortak temalar belirlenmiştir. Diğer kodlayıcının bireysel olarak verileri analiz etmesini sağlayacak şekilde başlıklar ve kod kitapçığı oluşturulmuştur.

Arařtırmacının önyargısını azaltmak ve güvenilirlięi artırmak amacıyla verilerin yorumlanması, kodların mültecilerin deneyimleriyle tutarlı olup olmadığını kontrol etmek amacıyla analiz edilmiş veri ile kod kitapçığı araştırma ortaklarına gönderilmiştir. Ayrıca, arařtırmacı önyargısını azaltmak amacıyla bağımsız bir arařtırmacıya görüşme verileri ve kodlarının bir kopyası gönderilmiştir. Ayrıca görüşmelerden elde edilen ifadeler, sonuçların geçerliliğini ve güvenilirliğini arttırmaya yardımcı olan kodlar ve veriler arasında bağlantı kurmak için kullanılmıştır.

## **Sonuçlar**

Görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular, dört ana bölüm ve bu bölümlerin her birinin altında alt bölümleri olmak üzere: (1) Mültecilerin Göç Deneyimleri, (2) Mültecilerin Yeniden Yerleşim Sürecindeki Deneyimleri, ve (3) Türkiye’de Suriyeli Mültecilerin Geleceęi, ve (4) Suriyeli Mültecilerin Önerileri şeklinde sınıflandırılmıştır.

Benzer travmatik deneyimlere maruz kalmak, bireylerin bu olaylara aynı tepkiyi göstereceęi anlamına gelmemektedir. Bazı mülteciler travmatik büyüme yönünde bir eğilim gösterirken, bazılarında travmatik reaksiyonlar geliştirme eğilimi görülmektedir. Uyum sürecinde mülteciler (1) travmatik reaksiyonlar geliştirebilir, (2) dirençli olabilir ve / veya (3) travma sonrası büyüme gösterebilirler. Mültecilerin travmatik deneyimlere tepkisi, depresyon, korku, yabancılaşma ve güvensizlik duygularını içerebilir. Güvenli bir yere vardıldıktan sonra mülteciler yeni çevreye uyum sağlamaya çalışmaktadırlar. Yeniden yerleşim sürecinde, bazı faktörler mültecilerin yeni bir ülkeye uyumunu zorlaştırırken, bazı faktörler ise uyum sürecini kolaylaştırmaktadır.

Katılımcılara göç öncesi süreçte ve göç sürecinde yaşadıkları travmatik deneyimler olarak sevdiklerinin ölümüyle ilgili alt temalarını, evlerinin yıkılması, işkenceye tanıklık etmek vey abuna maruz kalmak, temel haklarından mahrum bırakılmak, su ve elektriğin yokluğu, kötüleşen ekonomik şartlar ve temel gıdalara erişimin kısıtlanmasını içeren travmatik deneyimlerinden bahsetmişlerdir. Tüm bu faktörlerin katılımcıların göç etme kararını almalarında etkisi olduęu bulunmuştur.

Mültecilerin en kötü travmatik deneyimi, yakın aile üyelerinin ölümüne maruz kalmak olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Mülteciler, akrabalarının ve sevdiklerinin aniden öldüklerini, bir kısmının sokakta yürürken, evlerinde oturdukları esnada yapılan bombalamalar sebebiyle hayatlarını yitirdiklerini ifade etmiştir. Yaşadıkları kayıplar ile ilgili mülteciler duydukları üzüntüyü ifade ederek, daha fazla soruya cevap vermekten kaçınmıştır.

Nizam (Esad) birlikleri kardeşimi kannas ile öldürdüler. Sokakta üzerinde pijamasıyla karşıdan karşıya geçmeye çalışıyordu. Hiçbir grup veya kişi ile alakası yoktu. Ancak kannas ile vurdular. Hastaneye gittik. Kardeşim ile ilgili olan kısmı anlatmak istemiyorum müsaadenle. Hatırlamak beni üzüyor.

Akrabalarını ve arkadaşlarını doğal olmayan bir şekilde kaybetmiş olmaları mültecilerin yeniden yerleşim süreçlerini üzerinde etkisi olan faktörlerden biridir. Kayıplarına değinirken, bir kısmı kayıplarıyla ilgili daha fazla soruya cevap vermek istemezken, katılımcılardan bazıları üzüntülerini bir gülümseme ile gizlemeye çalışmış ve gözlerinin dolduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu kayıpların etkilerini hala hissettiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Yaşamış oldukları kayıplar mültecilerin psikosozyal iyilik hallerini birçok yönden etkilemektedir. Mülteciler aile üyelerini ani ve doğal olmayan yollarla kaybettikten sonra, artan sorumluluklarından bahsetmiştir. Kardeşini kaybetmek ve kendi başına tüm aileye bakmak zorunda kalan görüşmecilerden biri, yeni bir ülkeye göç ettikten sonra, işini kaybetme ve ailesine bakamayacak duruma düşme kaygısının ve endişesinin arttığını belirtmiştir.

Kötüleşen ekonomik koşullar ve su, elektrik ve temel gıdalara erişim zorluğu, mültecilerin çaresiz hissetmelerine ve zor şartlar altında yaşamaya zorlayan faktörlerden birkaçı olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Ek olarak, özgürlüklerini kaybetmiş olmanın da kendilerini kötü ve üzgün hissetmelerini sağladığını ifade etmişlerdir. Türkiye'ye geldikten sonra mülteciler, evlerinde elektrik ve suya erişiyor olmanın ve temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilmelerinin kendilerini rahatlamış ve daha az stresli hissetmelerini sağladığını ifade etmişlerdir.

Elektrik var, su var. İnsanlar belki bunların çok büyük nimetler olduğunun farkında değil ama bizim için bu bir nimet. Su, elektrik ve internet var.

İnsanlarla iletişim kurabiliyorsun. Bunlar güzel şeyler. Suriye’de şu an savaş var ve elektrik gelse bile belli saatler aralığında geliyor.

Katılımcılar maruz kaldıkları şiddet ve terörün korku hissetmelerine sebep olduğunu ve bu korku sebebiyle evlerinden çıkmaya zorlandıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcılar, Suriye’nin kendileri için güvenli bir yer olacağına dair inançlarını yitirdiklerini ve savaştan sonra bile, ülkelerinin kendileri için güvenli bir yer olacağına inanmadıklarını bildirmişlerdir. Suriye’de yaşayan aile bireyleri olmasına rağmen, mülteciler yaşadıkları zorluklardan sonra vatanlarına dönüp orada yaşamayı düşünmediklerini belirtmiştir.

Şu an Nizam birlikleri gitse dahi ben ülkemizin temizleneceğine inanamayacağım. Nizam’ın uzun tırnakları var. Yani benim güven duygum yok. Geri dönemem. Ama 6 yıldır görmediğim ve çok özlediğim bir kız kardeşim var. Suriye’de halen. Ancak Suriye’ye gitmek istemiyorum. Çünkü güven duygum yok.

Türkiye’ye geldikten sonra mülteciler rahatlamış ve güvende hissettiklerini bildirmişlerdir. Zorlu yaşam koşullarına (konut, çalışma koşulları vb.) sahip olsalar bile, güvende olduklarını bilmek mültecilerin kendilerini iyi hissetmelerini sağladığını belirtmişlerdir.

Mülteciler yeniden yerleşim süreçlerinde karşılaştıkları ve bu süreci olumsuz yönde etkileyen, ayrımcı tutumlar, kötü yaşam koşullarından bahsetmişlerdir. Öte yandan uyum süreçlerini kolaylaştıran ev sahibi ülkedeki mevcut deneyimlerini ifade etmişlerdir.

Katılımcılar, kendilerinden önce Türkiye’ye yerleşmiş akrabalarının bulunmasının uyum süreçlerini kolaylaştırdığını belirtmiştir. Akrabalarının, onlara Türkiye’nin güvenli bir yer olduğu ve Türkiye’de hayatlarını sürdürebilecekleri yönünde bilgileri sağladıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca, mülteciler, Türkiye’ye geldikten sonra, işlerini bulup evlerini kiralayana kadar geçen süreçte akrabalarının desteğini aldıklarını ve yeniden yerleşim sürecinin ilk aşamasında maddi manevi desteğin yardımcı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir.

Katılımcılardan birkaçı, ev sahibi ülkede çalışma koşullarından memnun olmadıklarını, ağır iş yükü olduğunu, kendilerine düşük ücretler verildiğini ve işverenlerin ayrımcı tutumlarından şikayetçi olmuştur. Mülteciler, Türkler ile aynı işi yapıyor olsalar bile sigortalarının yapılmadığını ve aynı ücreti almadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Öte yandan görüşmeciler, ekonomik koşullarının iyileştiğini ve bunun da yeniden yerleşim süreçleri üzerindeki olumlu etkilerinden bahsetmişlerdir. İş sahibi olduktan sonra, daha iyi koşullarda yaşayabildiklerini ve yaşamlarını sürdürebildiklerini ifade etmişlerdir.

Sonra kendi evimize çıktık. Hayat daha iyi olmaya başladı. Babam iş bulabildi. Şu an Türkçe bilmiyor ama bulaşıkçı olarak çalışıyor. Elhamdulillah durumumuz yavaş yavaş düzelmeye başladı.

Mali yardım almanın mültecilerin toparlanmalarına ve hayatlarını daha iyi hale getirmelerine yardımcı olan faktörlerden biri olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Görüşmeye katılanların hemen hemen tamamı, finansal yardım almanın kendilerine nasıl yardımcı olduğundan ve bu mali destekten faydalanamayanlar ise destek alamadıklarında duydukları üzüntüden bahsetmişlerdir.

Kızılay kart almaya başladık. Bu evimizin kirasını ödeyebilmemiz konusunda bize çok destek oldu.

Çalışma sonuçlarına göre ev sahibi ülkenin dilini bilmek ya da öğrenmek, entegrasyon sürecinin önemli bir parçasıdır. Katılımcıların az bir kısmı akıcı bir şekilde Türkçe konuşabiliyorken, çoğunluğu hala dili konuşamıyor ya da anlayamıyordu. Tüm katılımcılar, Türkçe öğrenmeyi zor bulduklarını bildirmişlerdir. Katılımcıların yeniden yerleşim süreçlerinde sırasında dil uyum süreçlerini etkileyen en yaygın engellerden biri olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Dil öğrenme konusunda kadın mültecilerin erkek mültecilerden daha fazla zorlandıkları görülmüştür. Kültürel olarak, bir erkeğin refakati olmaksızın dışarı çıkamıyor olmak ve ev içerisindeki işlerin tümünün kadınlar tarafından yapılıyor olması nedeniyle kadın mülteciler Türkçeye hakim olamamaktadır.

Eşimin beni ASAM'a götürmesini çok isterdim. Keşke benim gitmemi kabul etse, izin verse. Eşim bana diyor ki ben sürekli evden çıkan dışarı giden kadını sevmiyorum. Ve yabancı bir ülkedeyiz de. Burası bizim vatanımız değil.

Katılımcıların çoğu sosyal desteğin psikososyal iyilik halleri üzerinde olumlu etkiler yarattığını, aile üyelerinin kendileri için önemli olduğunu ve aileden aldıkları desteğin önemini ifade etmişlerdir. Özellikle aileden alınan sosyal desteğin mültecilerin uyum süreçlerini kolaylaştırdığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Annem, babam ve elbette eşim beni manevi olarak en çok destekleyen kişiler. Onlar bana kol kanat geriyor ve beni destekliyor. Ailem yanımda olmasaydı şu an çok kötü olurum ama elhamdulillah onlara sahibim.

Katılımcıların neredeyse tamamı, Türkiye'de karşılaştıkları ayrımcı tutumlardan bahsetmişlerdir. Görüşmeciler, Türkiye'de iyi muamele gördüklerini de ifade etmiş ancak ev sahibi ülkede en az bir ayrımcılığa maruz kaldıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Ayrımcı tutumlar, görüşmecilerin uyum sürecini olumsuz yönde etkileyen faktörlerden birisi olarak ele alınmıştır. Ayrımcılığa maruz kalmanın, mültecilerin kendilerini kötü ve depresif hissetmelerine sebep olduğu belirtilmiştir.

Ancak zor olanlar da var yani gurbette olmak, bize Suriyeli olarak bakışları ve en çok zorlayan ise dil bilmemek. Yani etrafta beni Suriyeli olduğum için küçük gören kişiler oluyor. Bu çok zor.

## **Tartışma**

Suriyeli mülteciler arasında göç öncesi travmatik deneyimlerin yaygın olduğu ve katılımcıların çoğunluğunun, ülkelerini terk etmeden önce en az iki travmatik olaya maruz kaldıkları bulunmuştur. Suriyeli mültecilerin göç öncesi ve göç sırasında yaşadıkları deneyimler; acı çekme, işkence, sevdiklerinden ayrılma, sevdiklerinin ölümü, hayatlarını kaybetme korkusu, ülkelerinden ani ve istemsiz bir şekilde ayrılmak zorunda kalma, zulümle karşı karşıya kalma ve güvenli bir yere ulaşmayacak olma korkusu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bulgular Bemak ve Chung (2017), Straiton ve ark. (2016), Turrini ve ark. (2002) ile Tribe'in (2017) çalışma bulguları ile uyumludur. Bemak ve Chung'un (2015) araştırma sonuçları mültecilerin göç süreçlerinde varacakları yer konusunda yaşadıkları belirsizliğin mültecilerin

psikolojik ve fiziksel refahını etkilediğini ve güvenlik duygularını tehdit ettiğini bildirmiştir.

Ev sahibi ülkeye geldikten sonra ise mülteciler yeni bir ülkeye uyum süreçlerini kolaylaştıran ve zorlaştıran faktörlerden bahsetmişlerdir. Bazı görüşmeciler kendilerini Türkiye'de mutlu, rahatlamış ve güvende hissederken, bazı katılımcılar ise üzüntü ve yalnızlık duygularından bahsetmişlerdir. Mevcut çalışmanın bulguları, güvenli bir yere ulaştıklarını bilmenin mültecileri rahatlattığını göstermektedir. Bu bulgular aynı zamanda Tribe'ın (2002) çalışması ile uyumludur. Ayrıca, aile fertlerinin yanlarında olması, iş piyasasına erişim ve dil biliyor olmanın mültecilerin psikososyal uyumunu kolaylaştırdığı bulunmuştur. Benzer şekilde, Schweitzer ve arkadaşlarının (2006) çalışma bulguları, sosyal destek almanın ve dil bilmenin mültecilerin hem zihinsel hem psikolojik sorunlarının savunmasızlığına karşı koruyabileceğini, hem de bireyi travmatik deneyimlerin olumsuz etkilerinden koruyabildiğini göstermektedir. Araştırmalar, sosyal desteklerin, güvenlik ağlarının ve kültürün dayanıklılığı teşvik etmede ve yeniden yerleşim sürecini kolaylaştırmada önemli faktörler olduğunu öne sürmektedir (Kaplan ve diğerleri, 1996; King ve ark., 1998; Lin, vd., 1979; Ozbay ve ark., 1996). 2008).

Suriyeli mülteciler ve Türk halkı arasındaki iletişim ve etkileşim eksikliği nüfuslar arasındaki önyargıları beslemektedir. Toplumların etkileşimini sağlayacak bir müdahale programının kanun yapıcılar yada alanda çalışan STK'lar tarafından uygulanması mültecilerin ve yerel halkın arasındaki iletişimi arttırarak gruplar arasında önyargıların azaltılmasına aracılık edebilir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre, finansal yardım ve istihdamın mültecilerin yaşam kalitesini ve ruhsal sağlığını doğrudan etkilediği bulunmuştur. Müdahaleler, mültecilere finansal ve psikososyal destek sağlamak için dikkatli bir şekilde tasarlanmalıdır. Ayrıca, mültecilerin ruh sağlığına etki eden risklerin ve koruyucu faktörler konusunda bilgi sahibi olunması sunulacak olan hizmetlerin kalitesini arttıracaktır.

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