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Examination of inclusive educational experiences of refugee students in secondary and high schools in Turkey

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the views of students with refugee status who have emigrated to Turkey for various reasons and are continuing their education in secondary and high schools about the Turkish education system. A total of 149 students (76 male, 73 female) in two different groups, who were attending grades 5-8 and 9-12 in the 2018-2019 academic year, participated in the study which used descriptive research and the survey model in conjunction with each other. The results showed that although the education staff welcomed refugee students, they could not make academic adaptations to suit the unique characteristics of these students. While it was found that the majority of students (51%) had adapted to school in Turkey, some (30%) were not actively attending school, and some (27%) had difficulty meeting their basic needs. The results regarding communication and cooperation showed that while these students could easily express themselves to their classmates and teachers, around 20% experienced undecidedness. Data obtained directly from refugee students in this study are crucial for developing policies and projects to give them access to education, enable them to adapt, and guide future studies. More studies are needed to monitor whether the inclusive practices used in Turkey and throughout the world indeed meet what is intended.

Keywords: Refugee, refugee student, student views, inclusive education

Introduction

Immigration is generally defined as a displacement of significant impact occurring during a certain time interval (Erder, 2000). Beter (2006) states that children who are forced to migrate and encounter traumatic events will be negatively affected by the displacement process. In addition to the psychological traumas they experience, refugees who are unable to benefit sufficiently from education opportunities are also at risk of increased crime rate (Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies [ORSAM], 2015); find social adaptation difficult due to differences in language, culture and living styles (UNICEF, 2016); and face social discrimination and sexual exploitation (Boyden et al., 2002).

For immigrants who do not have a settled life after migration, schools are unique institutions for coping with the traumas they experience, representing safe learning spaces and offering interaction opportunities (Matthews, 2008). Taylor and Sidhu (2012) indicate that in order to realize targeted policies for refugees, their educational needs should be met as well as their basic needs.

Inclusiveness in education is about making schools responsive to the needs of all children so that they can use educational opportunities equally, regardless of their age, identity or cultural differences (Braunsteiner & Lapidus, 2014; Messiou, 2017). Inclusive education is about creating learning environments for each child and reducing the barriers to learning (Tiemann, 2018). In other words, inclusive education is expanding to cover SEN, disability, gender, sexual orientation, socio-linguistic and cultural background, ethnic origin, religion and race (Ajmal, et al., 2017; Sturm, 2019). Internationally, inclusion is increasingly being adopted as a reform that promotes diversity among students. For example, the UN (2017) defines inclusive education as "*providing inclusive and equal education to all students and encouraging lifelong learning opportunities*" (p.1). An example of the expansion in the term of inclusive education may be seen in Hope and Hall (2018), who focus on the experiences and inclusion processes of students defined as LGBTQ into the education system. The concept of inclusion used in this study is based on the broad formulation highlighted in the previous references.

The Salamanca Declaration has become not only a political tool for framing inclusive education, but also a global policy vision (Pijl et al., 1997). In fact, the framework determined by the Salamanca Declaration responds to the definition and practices of inclusive education and serves as a guide in determining both the 2030 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and commitments to access quality education.

Limbach-Reich (2015) suggests three reasons to support inclusive education: The first is that inclusive education uses instructional methods that benefit all children and respond to individual differences; secondly, it encourages positive attitudes towards diversity; and thirdly, establishing schools that educate all children is less costly than establishing a complex system made up of different school types. As emphasized by Kirk and Cassity (2007), minimum standards are needed for quality education for refugee students. These standards are (1) community support, (2) access to education, (3) learning standards, (4) education staff competencies, and (5) coordination.

There are different approaches to inclusive education. For example, the basic approaches determined by the UNHCR (2001, p.1) towards the education of refugee students focus on a positive teacher approach, taking the formal curriculum as the basis, taking the mother tongue into consideration and using apt communication skills. Ainscow (1999), who emphasizes that schools play a key role in inclusive education, points to some common components which can help schools that have already made progress in reaching all students to develop more inclusive practices. These components are (a) using existing practice and knowledge as starting points for improvement, (b) seeing differences as learning opportunities rather than problems to be corrected, (c) examining barriers to student engagement, (d) using available resources effectively to support learning, (e) developing a language of practice, and (f) creating conditions that encourage some degree of risk-taking. These components reveal that schools and teachers play very important roles in the adaptation of refugee students to new school environments (Hamilton, 2003) and that there is a need to take into account the needs of refugee students (Matthews, 2008).

Local Context: Developments Related to Inclusive Education for Refugee Students in Turkey

The definition and applications of inclusive education vary widely across countries (Amor et al., 2018; Artiles et al., 2006; Göransson & Nilholm, 2014; Nilholm & Göransson, 2017). As of 2020, there were a total of 3.9 million refugees in Turkey, a country subject to large migration flows according to the statistics from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2020). With the law on foreigners and international protection which was passed in 2014 and relates specifically to the status of Syrian refugees (3.6 million) who have a greater intensity according to 2020 UNHCR data compared to other groups of refugees in Turkey (Iraqis, Iranians, Palestinians and Somalis), Syrians gained official status and came under "*Temporary Protection*" (İçduyu & Şimşek, 2016).

Aiming to identify and meet the educational needs of refugee students, Turkey has adopted certain decisions and policies. Within the scope of the "*Inclusive Education Project*" aimed for refugee students, Temporary Education Centers (TEC) and the Supporting the Integration of Syrian

Children into the Turkish Education System (PICTES) project are implemented in the country. TEC, the first step of the project, includes support training for Syrian teachers. In the second step, there is training to support teachers who are responsible for the education of foreign students in their classrooms. The last step of the project focuses on developing a training module for teachers in partnership with Erciyes University and UNICEF (Ministry of Education-MoNE, 2017). The MoNE decided on a gradual transition to the inclusive education model starting from the 2016-2017 academic year. With this model, the aim was to protect Syrian students from discrimination, to accelerate their adaptation processes, and to organize teaching activities by taking into account student diversity.

Literature Review

A brief overview of studies conducted on refugee students reveals various difficulties experienced by these students in their education and training environments (Balkar et al., 2016; Stepaniuk, 2019), academic skills (Miller et al., 2005), adaptation (Kanu, 2008), teachers' approaches (Aslan & Kozikoğlu, 2017; De Boer et al., 2011; González-Gil et al., 2013), and the efficient use of language (Başar et al., 2018). In addition to these concerns, Rutter (2006) point out the lack of funding for refugee students. On the other hand, other studies stress that the inclusion of refugee students in the instructional process facilitates their adaptation (Croce, 2018), provides an environment of trust between students (Alharbi, 2017) and increases peer interaction (Gateley, 2015; McParker, 2018). Also, previous reserach shows that the following constitute barriers to inclusive education: attitudes towards teaching in inclusive classrooms, lack of inclusive education policies, deficient professional development on teachers' part, and a lack of vision regarding inclusive education (Haug, 2017; Sharma et al., 2018).

It can be seen that the problems in the education of refugee students in Turkey are mainly centered around teacher competencies (Aykırı, 2017; Sarıer, 2020), students' access to schools (Gencer, 2017), educational planning and coordination (Sakız, 2016), lack of teaching materials (Kardeş & Akman, 2018), adaptation (Yıldırım, 2020; Yüce, 2018), communication (Çakmak, 2018), crowded classrooms, and the physical infrastructural inadequacy of schools (Gencer, 2017; Sarıer, 2020).

The Present Study

The integration of students with refugee status into educational environments is essential in order to explore their views on the difficulties they face in communication and instruction, their access to instructional processes and how effective these processes are. This would help reveal the

reflections of existing practices in inclusive education on students and reveal the difficulties encountered in this process.

It is hoped that the evidence to be obtained in this study will help shape the important elements of education, such as the development of classroom practice, school and teacher development, change in managerial approaches, and systemic change towards a more inclusive direction. By unveiling the educational experiences of different groups of refugee students in Turkey and the noticeable differences in practice, this study hopes to fill the gap in the literature pertaining to studies based directly on the views of refugee students, to thus expand the relevant literature, and contribute to the development of more rational education policies and strategies for the increasing number of refugee students. The general purpose of this study is to examine the views of refugee students about inclusive education.

More specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the views of refugee students about inclusive education?
- Is there a difference between the views of girls and boys about inclusive education?
- Is there a difference between the views of refugee students in secondary and senior high schools about inclusive education?

Methodology

Research design

Descriptive and relational survey models were used together in this study which aims to determine the problems that refugee students face in the education process and whether these problems differ in terms of various variables.

Study group

The study was conducted on two different groups consisting of secondary and senior high school students during the 2018-2019 school year. The study group consisting of 149 students in total included students of five different secondary schools and senior high schools in Mardin city center where inclusive education was offered. The schools were selected with the purposeful sampling method known as criterion sampling. Purposeful sampling enables in-depth study of cases which are thought to be rich in information (Patton, 2002). The main approach adopted in criterion sampling, on the other hand, includes the study of all situations which meet a predetermined set of criteria. The criteria to be used in this study included being a refugee student and continuing to study at secondary or high school. The characteristics of the students participating in the study are summarized in Table

1.

Table 1.
Participant characteristics

Age	n (%)	Nationality	n (%)	Gender	n (%)	Class	n (%)
10-12	30 (20.13)	Palestine	1 (.07)	Female	73 (49.0)	5th-8th Grades (Secondary school)	81 (54.4)
13-15	64 (43.0)	Iraq	7 (4.7)	Male	76 (51.0)	9th-12th Grades (Senior high school)	68 (45.6)
16-18	54 (36.20)	Syria	141 (94.6)				
19+	1 (.067)						

According to Table 1, 20.13% (n = 30) of the participants were 10-12 years old, 43.0% (n = 64) were between 13 and 15 years old, 36.20% (n = 54) were 16-18 years old and .067% were 19 and over. When gender distributions are examined, 49.0% (n = 73) of the participants were female and 51% (n = 76) were male. In terms of nationality, the largest group of the participants came from Syria with 94.6% (n = 141), followed by Iraq with 4.7% (n = 7) and Palestine with .07% (n = 1). When class distributions are examined, it is seen that 54.4% (n = 81) of the participants were between 5th and 8th grades and 45.6% (n = 68) were from 9th and 12th grades.

Data collection tools

The questionnaire developed in this study aimed to determine the opinions of refugee students at secondary schools and senior high schools about the instructional process. In order to prepare questions for both senior high and secondary school students, previous questionnaires cited in the literature for these age groups were studied. To prepare the assessment tool, 40 students at secondary and senior high schools were asked to write an essay reflecting their feelings and thoughts on the instructional process. After examining these essays and reviewing the literature, a draft form consisting of 24 items was created. This draft form was evaluated by 4 experts, 3 of whom specialized in curriculum and instruction and the other one in psychological counseling. In this way, a trial form of the questionnaire consisting of 24 items was created. All 24 items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), and the overall scale had high internal consistency (alpha = .88).

Data collection

The questionnaire prepared by the researchers was distributed to the students upon obtaining the necessary permission from Mardin Provincial Directorate of National Education. Schools with a dense refugee student population were identified with support from the authorities. The questionnaire was then distributed to students in five schools (3 secondary schools and 2 senior high schools)

selected by the researchers for the purpose of the study. Of the questionnaires answered by 175 students in total, 149 that were fully completed were evaluated. During the data collection process, the relevant schools were visited by the researchers and the students were informed about the aims, duration, procedures and confidentiality of data. Support was received from teachers of foreign nationality when explanations required translation. The study was approved by the ethics committee of the institute of educational sciences of Fırat University (document number 414434).

Data analysis

The data obtained through the study were analyzed using descriptive analysis (frequency, percentages, arithmetic means, standard deviation). The use of arithmetic mean in the analysis of data aimed to evaluate the problems of refugee students that are clustered under certain dimensions (such as teacher competence, adaptation, communication) individually or in a holistic manner. In addition, chi-square (X^2) analysis was used to determine the difference between students' views according to their genders and educational levels.

Results

The views on the problems faced by refugee students in the education process were analyzed in line with the relevant literature by creating three main themes: "*education staff competence*", "*compliance and access*" and "*communication and cooperation*". The tables presenting the findings were organized to include descriptive statistics pertaining to the questionnaire items and the variable of school level. The chi-square analysis results (X^2) of the gender variable were not given in the table due to space limitations but were explained in the findings section for each theme.

Refugee students' views on "education staff competence"

The opinions of refugee students about the competence of education staff, an important component in educational life, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Distribution of refugee students' opinions regarding "education staff competence" in the education process

Items	Grade Level	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always					
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	M	SD	X^2	*df*	*p*
1. My teachers treat me as they do my other friends; they do not discriminate.	5th -8th	2 (2,5)	1 (1,2)	14 (17,3)	10 (12,3)	53 (65,4)	4,38	.98			
	9th-12th	11 (16,2)	8 (11,8)	13 (19,1)	8 (11,8)	28 (41,2)	3,50	1,52	19,66	5	.001*
	Total	13 (8,7)	9 (6,0)	27 (18,1)	18 (12,1)	81 (54,4)	3,97	1,32			
6. My teachers organize in-class activities to develop better friendships.	5th -8th	2 (2,5)	9 (11,1)	12 (14,8)	22 (27,2)	35 (43,2)	3,98	1,12			
	9th-12th	4 (5,9)	8 (11,8)	15 (22,1)	17 (25,0)	21 (30,9)	3,66	1,20	5,10	5	.403
	Total	6 (4,0)	17 (11,4)	27 (18,1)	39 (26,2)	56 (37,6)	3,84	1,16			

Table 2 (continued)

8. My teachers help me in becoming interested in the lessons.	5th -8th	4 (4,9)	6 (7,4)	8 (9,9)	14 (17,3)	47 (58,0)	4,18	1,18			
	9th-12th	4 (5,9)	4 (5,9)	19 (27,9)	9 (13,2)	32 (47,1)	3,89	1,23	9,75	5	.082
	Total	8 (5,4)	10 (6,7)	27 (18,1)	23 (15,4)	79 (53,0)	4,05	1,21			
9. My teachers give me the opportunity to participate in classroom activities.	5th -8th	9 (11,1)	6 (7,4)	14 (17,3)	13 (16,0)	39 (48,1)	3,82	1,39			
	9th-12th	3 (4,4)	10 (14,7)	15 (22,1)	14 (20,6)	26 (38,2)	3,73	1,24	5,58	4	.233
	Total	12 (8,1)	16 (10,7)	29 (19,5)	27 (18,1)	65 (43,6)	3,78	1,32			
16. My teachers support me to participate in extracurricular events/activities at school.	5th -8th	12 (14,8)	8 (9,9)	16 (19,8)	13 (16,0)	32 (39,5)	3,55	1,46			
	9th-12th	8 (11,8)	8 (11,8)	16 (23,5)	15 (22,1)	20 (29,4)	3,46	1,34	3,60	5	.608
	Total	20 (13,4)	16 (10,7)	32 (21,5)	28 (18,8)	52 (34,9)	3,51	1,40			
20. My teachers plan and implement activities that are in accordance with my personality traits when they teach their lesson (preparedness to the course/language problem /reading comprehension).	5th -8th	10(12,3)	5 (6,2)	14 (17,3)	20 (24,7)	32 (39,5)	3,72	1,36			
	9th-12th	3 (4,4)	6 (8,8)	27 (39,7)	13 (19,1)	19 (27,9)	3,57	1,12	11,73	4	.019*
	Total	13 (8,7)	11 (7,4)	41 (27,5)	33 (22,1)	51 (34,2)	3,65	1,26			
21. During the lesson I can easily ask the teacher about the parts that I don't understand.	5th -8th	5 (6,2)	5 (6,2)	17 (21,0)	14 (17,3)	39 (48,1)	3,95	1,22			
	9th-12th	8 (11,8)	9 (13,2)	17 (25,0)	7 (10,3)	26 (38,2)	3,51	1,41	5,67	5	.339
	Total	13 (8,7)	14 (9,4)	34 (22,8)	21 (14,1)	65 (43,6)	3,75	1,33			
22. My teachers give me homework in accordance with my personality traits (preparedness to the course/language problem /reading comprehension).	5th -8th	11 (13,6)	7 (8,6)	8 (9,9)	12 (14,8)	42 (51,9)	3,83	1,47			
	9th-12th	11 (16,2)	5 (7,4)	24 (35,3)	11 (16,2)	17 (25,0)	3,26	1,35	18,98	5	.002*
	Total	22 (14,8)	12 (8,1)	32 (21,5)	23 (15,4)	59 (39,6)	3,57	1,44			
23. My teachers hold written exams that are in accordance with my personality traits (preparedness to the course/language problem /reading comprehension).	5th -8th	12 (14,8)	7 (8,6)	11 (13,6)	12 (14,8)	39 (48,1)	3,72	1,50			
	9th-12th	8 (11,8)	14 (20,6)	18 (26,5)	12 (17,6)	16 (23,5)	3,20	1,33	13,40	4	.009
	Total	20 (13,4)	21 (14,1)	29 (19,5)	24 (16,1)	55 (36,9)	3,48	1,44			
24. My teachers use tools and equipment that are in accordance with my personality traits (preparedness to the course/language problem /reading comprehension).	5th -8th	9 (11,1)	2 (2,5)	13 (16,0)	20 (24,7)	37 (45,7)	3,91	1,31			
	9th-12th	14 (20,6)	9(13,2)	18 (26,5)	8 (11,8)	19 (27,9)	3,13	1,48	16,26	4	.003*
	Total	23 (15,4)	11 (7,4)	31 (20,8)	28 (18,8)	56 (37,6)	3,55	1,44			

Note: *p<.05

Table 2 shows that 54.4% of the students were always welcomed by their teachers, 53% of the students were always supported by their teachers to become interested in classes, 27.5% were sometimes given activities by their teachers, and 23% never had materials appropriate to their individual characteristics. According to the data, middle school students have more positive opinions about education staff competence than high school students in all topics. The highest rate of positive opinions among middle school students was in the item "*My teachers treat me as they do my other friends; they do not discriminate against me*" (M = 4.38) and among high school students in the item "*My teachers encourage me to develop an interest in classes*" (M = 3.89). However, according to the questionnaire items, the biggest difference ($M_{difference}$ =.88) between the opinions of middle and

high school students was found in item 1, and the smallest difference in items 9 and 16 with equal rates ($M_{difference}$ =.09). On the other hand, the values observed in items 23 (*M* = 3.48), 16 (*M* = 3.51), 24 (*M* = 3.55), 22 (*M* = 3.57), and 20 (*M* = 3.65) point to various difficulties that teachers face in the adaptation process for refugee students. The chi-square analysis showed a statistically significant difference in the opinions of middle and high school students in items 1, 20, 22 and 24 (X^2, p <0.05). Accordingly, it can be said that refugee students' views on teachers were affected by education level.

A potential difference in male and female refugee students views about inclusive education was examined in relation to each item in this theme. The chi-square analysis showed a significant difference only in items 23 (at a marginal level; [$X^2(4, n = 149) = 8{,}282$, p<0.082]) and 24 ($X^2$[4, n = 149] = 9,994, p<0.041). In nonsignificant items, the views of male and female refugee students were parallel. Students views in items 23 and 24, which reflected teachers' instructional adaptation competence, were affected by the gender variable.

Refugee students' views on "compliance and access"

The data reflecting the students' views on "*compliance and access*" are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Distribution of refugee students' opinions on "compliance and access" in the education process

Items	Grade Level	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	always					
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	M	SD	X^2	*df*	p
15. I meet my basic needs (food, beverage etc.) in school.	5th -8th	7 (8,6)	4 (4,9)	13 (16,0)	12 (14,8)	43 (53,1)	4,00	1,29			
	9th-12th	8 (11,8)	4 (5,9)	14 (20,6)	14 (20,6)	25 (36,8)	3,68	1,34	4,11	5	.532
	Total	15 (10,1)	8 (5,4)	27 (18,1)	26 (17,4)	68 (45,6)	3,86	1,32			
18. I come to school regularly; I try not to miss my lessons.	5th -8th	3 (3,7)	6 (7,4)	10 (12,3)	14 (17,3)	45 (55,6)	4,17	1,13			
	9th-12th	2 (2,9)	7 (10,3)	20 (29,4)	8 (11,8)	30 (44,1)	3,85	1,18	8,17	5	.147
	Total	5 (3,4)	13 (8,7)	30 (20,1)	22 (14,8)	75 (50,3)	4,02	1,16			
19. I'm glad I have a good time at school.	5th -8th	3 (3,7)	1 (1,2)	15 (18,5)	8 (9,9)	53 (65,4)	4,33	1,06			
	9th-12th	6 (8,8)	5 (7,4)	13 (19,1)	19 (27,9)	23 (33,8)	3,73	1,25	19,48	5	.002*
	Total	9 (6,0)	6 (4,0)	28 (18,8)	27 (18,1)	76 (51,0)	4,06	1,86			

Note: *p<.05

According to Table 3, 51% of the students spent a good time at school, 50.3% actively attended school and 45.6% met their basic needs at school. However, it was also found that 30% of the students experienced indecision in their attendance to school, 28% had school satisfaction only from time to time, and 27% sometimes met their basic needs. In addition, it was seen that 10.1% of the students did not meet their basic needs and 8.8% were not satisfied with school at all. The table also shows that middle school students were able to meet their basic needs at school more than high school students; they attended school more actively, and they felt more school satisfaction. The highest

positive opinion among middle school students was in the item "*I am glad to have a good time at school*" (*M* = 4.33). For high school students, on the other hand, it was in the item "*I come to school regularly and try not to miss classes*" (*M* = 3.85). In addition, the biggest difference ($M_{difference}$ =.06) between the opinions of middle school and high school students was found in item 19, while the smallest difference existed in items 15 and 18, equally ($M_{difference}$ =.032). Accordingly, it can be said that middle school students were able to adapt more readily than high school students, and they accessed more school facilities. The results of the chi-square analysis (X^2) indicated a significant difference between the opinions of high school and middle school students only in item 19, which revolves around school satisfaction.

The questionnaire items in this theme did not vary based on gender. Therefore, male and female students may be said to have similar views.

Views of refugee students on "communication and cooperation"

In inclusive education practices that prioritize individual and social participation, students are desired to meet objectives that relate to academic priorities and socialization processes. Table 4 includes the views of refugee students on communication and cooperation.

Table 4.

Distribution of refugee students' views on "communication and cooperation" in the education process

Items	Grade Level	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always					
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	M	SD	X^2	*df*	p
2. My teachers help me in becoming adapted to the school.	5th -8th	3 (3,7)	8 (9,9)	12 (14,8)	8 (9,9)	50 (61,7)	4,16	1,21			
	9th-12th	1 (1,5)	4 (8,9)	18 (26,5)	14 (20,6)	29 (42,6)	4,00	1,03	11,70	5	.039*
	Total	4 (2,7)	12 (8,1)	30 (20,1)	22 (14,8)	79 (53,0)	4,08	1,13			
3. My teachers guide me in solving my problems.	5th -8th	2 (2,5)	5 (6,2)	12 (14,8)	25 (30,9)	35 (43,2)	4,08	1,02			
	9th-12th	10 (14,7)	3 (4,4)	17 (25,0)	13 (19,1)	24 (35,3)	3,57	1,39	11,82	5	.037*
	Total	12 (8,1)	8 (5,4)	29 (19,5)	38 (25,5)	59 (39,6)	3,84	1,23			
4. My teachers allow sufficient time to me in case I experience problems.	5th -8th	7 (8,6)	5 (6,2)	18 (22,2)	11 (13,6)	39 (48,1)	3,87	1,31			
	9th-12th	8 (11,8)	6 (8,8)	25 (36,8)	13 (19,1)	15 (22,1)	3,31	1,24	11,08	5	.050*
	Total	15 (10,1)	11 (7,4)	43 (28,9)	24 (16,1)	54 (36,2)	3,61	1,31			
5. My teachers accept me as I am.	5th -8th	6 (7,4)	7 (8,6)	15 (18,5)	18 (22,2)	33 (40,7)	3,82	1,26			
	9th-12th	3 (4,4)	2 (2,9)	15 (22,1)	14 (20,6)	32 (47,1)	4,05	1,10	3,18	5	.672
	Total	9 (6,0)	9 (6,0)	30 (20,1)	32 (21,5)	65 (43,6)	3,93	1,19			
7. I don't have any difficulty in communicating with my teachers; I express myself easily.	5th -8th	5 (6,2)	5 (6,2)	17 (21,0)	7 (8,6)	45 (55,6)	4,03	1,25			
	9th-12th	6 (8,8)	6 (8,8)	16 (23,5)	15 (22,1)	23 (33,8)	3,65	1,27	9,17	5	.102
	Total	11 (7,4)	11 (7,4)	33 (22,1)	22 (14,8)	68 (45,6)	3,86	1,27			
10. I don't have problems in communicating with my classmates; I express myself comfortably.	5th -8th	9 (11,1)	9 (11,1)	12 (14,8)	13 (16,0)	37 (45,7)	3,75	1,41			
	9th-12th	1 (1,5)	2 (2,9)	17 (25,0)	22 (32,4)	23 (33,8)	3,97	.92	17,29	5	.004*
	Total	10 (6,7)	11 (7,4)	29 (19,5)	35 (23,5)	60 (40,3)	3,85	1,21			
11. My classmates make efforts to become friends with me.	5th -8th	12 (14,8)	14 (17,3)	11 (13,6)	13 (16,0)	29 (35,8)	3,51	1,71			
	9th-12th	7 (10,3)	4 (5,9)	19 (27,9)	14 (20,6)	21 (30,9)	3,58	1,26	11,27	6	.080
	Total	19 (12,8)	18 (12,1)	30 (20,1)	27 (18,1)	50 (33,6)	3,54	1,52			
12. My classmates accept me as I am; they don't make any discrimination.	5th -8th	13 (16,0)	7 (8,6)	14 (17,3)	16 (19,8)	27 (33,3)	3,48	1,43			
	9th-12th	3 (4,4)	9 (13,2)	13 (19,1)	13 (19,1)	28 (41,2)	3,81	1,23	6,47	5	.265
	Total	16 (10,7)	16 (10,7)	27 (18,1)	29 (19,5)	55 (36,9)	3,63	1,35			
	5th -8th	15 (18,5)	6 (7,4)	14 (17,3)	7 (8,6)	37 (45,7)	3,57	1,56	7,47	5	.188

13. The families of my classmates are being nice to me.	9th-12th	6 (8,8)	2 (2,9)	15 (22,1)	13 (19,1)	31 (45,6)	3,90	1,26			
	Total	21 (14,1)	8 (5,4)	29 (19,5)	20 (13,4)	68 (45,6)	3,72	1,44			
14. My friends help me in becoming accustomed to the school.	5th -8th	11 (13,6)	5 (6,2)	10 (12,3)	21 (25,9)	34 (42,0)	3,76	1,40			
	9th-12th	7 (10,3)	4 (5,9)	19 (27,9)	14 (20,6)	24 (35,3)	3,64	1,30	5,82	4	.212
	Total	18 (12,1)	9 (6,0)	29 (19,5)	35 (23,5)	58 (38,9)	3,71	1,35			
17. My classmates are being nice to me.	5th -8th	9 (11,1)	6 (7,4)	11 (13,6)	10 (12,3)	45 (55,6)	3,93	1,41			
	9th-12th	2 (2,9)	5 (7,4)	15 (22,1)	12 (17,6)	34 (50,0)	4,04	1,13	5,78	4	.216
	Total	11 (7,4)	11 (7,4)	26 (17,4)	22 (14,8)	79 (53,0)	3,98	1,29			

Note: *p<.05

When Table 4 is examined, it can be seen that 53% of the students always received support from their teachers in the adaptation process, 43.6% were always accepted by their teachers, 53% were always welcomed by their classmates, and 45% felt comfortable with their teachers. On the other hand, it was reported by the students that 14.1% were not welcomed by their classmates' families, 12.1% were never supported by their friends in the adaptation process, 10.7% were discriminated against by their classmates, and 10.1% did not receive any support from teachers in solving problems. In addition, the values observed in items 4 (28.9%), 7 (22.1%), 2 (20.1%), 5 (20.1%), and 11 (20.1%) also showed that students were undecided. The highest rate of positive opinion among middle school students was observed in the item "*My teachers help me adapt to school*" (*M* = 4.16); but among high school students, in the item "*My teachers accept me as I am*" (*M* = 4.05). In addition, the biggest difference between the opinions of middle school and high school students emerged ($M_{difference}$ =.05) in items 3 and 4, and the smallest difference ($M_{difference}$ =.011) in item 17. It was seen that the differences between the arithmetic means of other items were close to each other. Accordingly, it can be said that the difference of opinion between high and middle school students in the item of teachers helping students with problems and allocating them sufficient time was more than the difference in other items. Chi-square analysis showed that high school and middle school students' opinions differed significantly in items 2, 3, 4 and 10 (X^2, p <0.05). Thus, it can be said that high school and middle school students expressed significantly different opinions about the support they received from their teachers in the adaptation process, the level of guidance provided by their teachers in problem situations, and the satisfactory interaction they had with their classmates.

The questionnaire items in this theme were examined with respect to gender, and the only difference was found in item 17 (“My classmates are nice to me”) ($X^2[4,\ \mathrm{n} = 149] = 11{,}392$, p<0.022). As the other items (2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14) did not present statistical significance, it was concluded that male and female students’ views in the theme of“ communication and cooperation” were similar.

Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to understand the difficulties that refugee students experience as learners in schools and to make contributions to developing the inclusive education context. Based on the purpose, the following research questions were formulated: “What are the views of refugee students about inclusive education?”, “Is there a difference between the views of girls and boys about inclusive education?”, and “Is there a difference between the views of refugee students in secondary and senior high schools about inclusive education?” The data collected from refugee students via the questionnaire are discussed below for each theme by referring to the variables of school level and gender: (1) education staff competence, (2) compliance and access, and (3) communication and cooperation.

The dimensions of the questionnaire, "*education staff competence*", "*compliance and access*" and "*communication and cooperation*", are parallel to the findings of previous research related to refugee students (Block et al., 2014; Dooley, 2009; Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Li, 2003; MacNevin, 2012; Şeker & Sirkeci, 2015; Taylor, 2008; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Tuomi, 2005; Windle & Miller, 2012).

When the results of this study concerning education staff (1) were evaluated, it was concluded that most students (54.4%) were welcomed by their teachers. However, in addition to the student reports (27.5%) stating that classroom practice arrangements were only partially made in accordance with the characteristics of refugee students, there were also results (23%) indicating that academic adaptations, which are indispensable for classroom-based practices, were never made. The conclusion about positive teacher attitudes is parallel to those of previous studies (Goddard & Evans, 2018; Batanero et al., 2021) and the objectives of inclusive education outlined by the Ministry of Education (2017). However, other results including adapting the learning environment were found to be inadequate to meet the criteria set by the INEE (2004) as a standard for refugee students and for reflecting teacher competence. In addition, the results of this study which suggest insufficient adaptation in learning environments corroborate those of studies by Li (2003), Dooley and Thangaperumal (2011), Şeker and Sirkeci (2015), Dooley (2009), Harris and Marlowe (2011), Kim and Rundgren (2019), Windle and Miller (2012) and MacNevin (2012).

Consistent with the research conducted in various countries, the results of the present study concerning education staff showed that teachers are not sufficiently prepared and need more knowledge and skills to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms (Urton et al., 2014; Woodcock & Hardy, 2017). Naturally, the failure to adapt teaching does not satisfy the objective clearly stated in the Salamanca Declaration (1994) that "*The curriculum and teaching techniques that may affect the school status of students will be adapted to their needs and preconditions*."

Significant gender differences in items 23 and 24 in the theme of education staff show that male and female students have different perceptions of teacher competence and materials. For successful implementation of inclusive education, Mitchell (2014), emphasizes the need for adapted instruction, while Schwab (2018) emphasizes sufficient staff resources. As shown by Forlin and Sin (2019), Sharma and Sokal (2015), what is needed to support all students is an effective curriculum, teacher self-competence and a positive attitude.

Another result under this theme (education staff) has been the significant difference between the opinions of middle school and high school students with regards to teacher attitude and academic approach. Secondary school students reported more positive opinions on all items as compared to high school students. This may be attributed to the differences in the developmental characteristics of the two groups, as this may affect views on teacher efficacy. In addition, according to data from the 2018-2019 academic year, the number of students enrolled in secondary schools (n = 656) in Mardin's Artuklu district was higher than that of students enrolled in high schools (n = 171). As a result, there is the possibility of encountering a refugee student in every classroom in secondary schools.

The results regarding the adaptation and access (2) of refugee students showed that while the majority (51%) adapted to school, attended school actively (50.3%), and met their basic needs (45.6%), there were also those who did not attend regularly, who were not satisfied with their schools (28%), and had difficulty meeting their basic needs (27%). Adaptation of refugee students, as stated by Taylor (2008), depends on developing appropriate policies and strategies for them. This must be the case in Turkey as almost half of the students (n = 75) reported school satisfaction. On the other hand, the presence of students who are undecided, dissatisfied or have difficulty meeting their basic needs clearly points to some problems with educational adaptation. Block et al. (2014) state that inclusive educational practices focusing on students' social and emotional needs increase adaptation and interaction. The fact that middle school students express more positive views than high school students suggests that they are better supported by their classmates, teachers, and the school community. However, the findings of our study do not provide sufficient information about the educational experiences of refugee students, nor do they show what the best support or arrangements are to address inequalities within the education system. For example, it remains unclear what materials and information are needed by refugee students and how their language education needs will be met.

Parallel to the findings of Goldan et al. (2021), gender did not lead to a difference in adaptation or access in this study, suggesting that male and female students have similar perceptions in maintaining school continuity and embracing school. Even though there are other studies in the

literature (Hughes et al., 2015; OECD, 2018; Scorgie & Forlin, 2019) which concluded that refugee students generally have a lower sense of school belonging, the current findings have shown them to hold positive attitudes about school, irrespective of their gender. Furthermore, the positive role of being in harmony with classmates in the well-being of refugee students was shown once again (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2020; Bianchi et al., 2021).

The results regarding the variables of communication and cooperation (3) revealed that approximately half of the refugee students expressed themselves easily to their teachers and classmates. However, it should also be noted that middle and high school students expressed similar views to each other, and approximately 20% of the students were undecided. It is worth remembering that increased undecidedness gives way to increased student doubts about adequate teacher support, classroom communication, friendship relations, acceptance and ultimately the school atmosphere. This situation embedded in the current curriculum and reflected by cultural and linguistic limitations (Cummins, 1996, p.220) demonstrates that indecisive bilingual students have to improve their skills in their first language in mainstream classrooms, and that new pedagogies which prioritize their previous learning and language experiences are needed.

In the communication and cooperation theme, the majority of male and female students had similar views. Students responded in one item that friendship between refugee and settled students was not at a desired level. This reflects being subjected to social discrimination and peer bullying (Palladino et al., 2020). A study by Ripamonti (2018) demonstrated that peer relations are associated with school dropout and that male refugee students are at a particularly high risk of dropout. Therefore, teacher support and a positive school climate may have a protective role in reducing contextual risk factors and preventing potential school dropout (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Regarding other organizational factors, it is important to organize students into heterogeneous groups. Difficulties in academic adaptation and customization, which constitute an important conclusion of this study, raise a number of issues on their own. For example, are the contents in advanced mathematics or science classrooms suitable for refugee students with inadequate academic preparation? Are the academic programs modified to suit student needs? A failure in these may cause fundamental problems in students' use of functional skills to prepare for life after school.

On the other hand, school curricula in Turkey, as in many western countries, offer significant challenges for teachers who want to implement the inclusive approach to education. Even though Turkey may have taken important steps towards inclusive education in its political discourse and regulations, it would not be surprising to encounter the same malpractices seen in other countries mentioned in Mitchell and Sutherland’s (2020) and Göransson and Nilholn’s (2014) studies. As emphasized by Goodman & Bond (1993), there is a tendency in school curricula to be inflexible,

linear, over-specialized, centralized and for not taking into account minority groups. In addition, as emphasized by Ricci et al. (2020), there are frequently encountered difficulties in Turkey such as developing teachers' pedagogical knowledge, curriculum modification and adaptation, developing materials for student needs, increasing adaptation efforts for bilingual students, functionalizing parental roles and increasing their participation, and the necessity for schools to have access to sufficient financial resources to meet inclusive education demands.

Larger systemic and political conditions play a significant role in supporting the inclusive practice efforts of education staff (Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019). Inclusive education should consider theoretical, methodological and philosophical dimensions (Bahdanovich et al., 2021), and theory and practice should be combined (Nilholm, 2020). In Turkey, where questions about the inclusive approach are beginning to change from “why” to “how”, practices such as the PICTES project and policy steps, such as the 2023 Education Vision Document (MoNE, 2019), constitute a strong basis for supporting the cultural diversity of refugees and other students at risk and creating an inclusive atmosphere in school environments.

Kinsella (2020) writes that the success of inclusive education relies on the value attached to an inclusive culture in the organizational development process. Therefore, in order to achieve the goals of inclusive education, certain topics should feature in policymakers' education agenda, such as respecting individual differences, increasing collaboration, developing and promoting adaptive educational practices, and empowering teachers by giving them autonomy.

Limitations and Future Research Areas

While this study made a great and successful effort to reveal the opinions of refugee students, it did not analyze their personal characteristics, the traumas they suffered, their preparedness levels, their literacy and critical thinking skills, and their language proficiencies. In addition to this, teacher attitudes, managerial approaches and the material capabilities of schools were not considered in the study, either. The results suggested that the education level of refugee students should also be considered as the two groups in the study obtained different scores. The study should be considered by remembering these limitations.

The results of the study offer a series of potential recommendations for future research. Firstly, the sample here was taken from a single sectional study. Future studies conducted with different samples of refugee students may complement the current study. Secondly, the questionnaire developed for this study was prepared in Turkish and implemented on refugee students who were attending inclusive education at Turkish schools. The questionnaire may be tested by using more representational samples in different countries to make a multi-directional comparison. Thirdly,

schools that successfully conduct inclusive education practices may be analyzed as a model.

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