



## SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES OF SYRIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS IN TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

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### Abstract:

In this study, the economic and social problems faced by Syrian students who were forcefully migrated to Turkey and studied in Osmaniye Ata University were examined. Many people who immigrated to Turkey due to the civil war that began in Syria in 2011 and were children in those years have started their university education today. The problems faced by Syrian asylum-seeking students studying at universities in the city of Osmaniye in their ability to meet their vital needs, sources of income, participation in education and adaptation processes were examined. The data of the study was obtained through in-depth interview and survey work, then analyzed through a statistical package program. As a result of the study, it was observed that Syrian students studying at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University faced many different economic problems in the city of Osmaniye where they lived. Many problems that Syrian students experience in their educational lives are financial, and financial concerns directly affect their social lives. In addition, it was revealed that as their stay in Turkey extended, they may experience anxiety about resettlement when they are sent back to their country.

**Keywords:** Syrian students, urban space, education, economic and social problems

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## 1. Introduction

The purposes of this study are following: exploring the economic and social problems faced by Syrian students who emigrated to Turkey and studied at universities today in the city where they live; to measure the relationship between the occupation of their parents, Turkish citizenship, daily spending limits, their approach to economic and social problems by meeting their needs, examine the experiences their migration process, economic and cultural changes, the language, adaptation and material problems they experience in the educational processes and finally we tried to offer an alternative to policies implemented for these students.

Osmaniye is a province in the eastern Mediterranean region of Turkey, close to the border with Syria. According to 2018 data, the province has a population of 534,415 and periodically migrates to Adana, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş provinces and receives migration from them. Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, which has 12,241 students in the field of education, carries the city forward in the field of education with the preference of both domestic and foreign students. Economically, the industry is mainly based on the export of food products in the province, the service sector has an important place. Large enterprises in the city produce mainly on the metal sector. Osmaniye, where agricultural production has an important place in its economy, especially has an important place in the production of corn, grain, peanuts and olives. Due to its proximity to the Syrian border, 48,974 Syrian people live in the city, which was affected by the wave of migration that began from Syria in 2011, according to 2019 data. This figure, which is equivalent to 9.16% of the city's population, is important in terms of the demographic structure of the city (osmaniyetso.org.tr, 2019).

Migration movements are an action that will never end in changing world conditions and can take place continuously. Cities, which are the general target point of migrations around the world, are a kind of gathering places in the migration process. Waves of migration from Syria have similarly affected urban areas in Turkey, and Turkish cities have been subjected to social, cultural and economic changes due to migration. Migrations are not unique to the modern world, but are actions that have taken place continuously individually or en masse from the existence of humanity to the present day. Every society has experienced migration movements, large or small, in its history and experienced the consequences of these migrations. When we look at the states around the world today, it is known that they were founded by people, most of whom came on migrations, or by the descendants of these people (Karpat, 2013, s. 86).

The insurgency movement, which has demonstrated its influence in many Arab countries and has been known as the Arab Spring, jumped into Syria. In 2011, violence against the democratic demands of the people in Syria escalated into armed conflict, and millions of people were forced to leave their places. The Republic of Turkey, which has been under the influence of immigration waves from abroad since its establishment, has become both a passageway and a refuge center for asylum seekers due to its 911 km borderline with Syria. This is due to the rise of internal conflicts, oppressive and

authoritarian regimes in the countries around us, and Turkey's proximity to Europe and the Middle East.

When the distribution of most of the Syrian refugees, according to the cities of Turkey is examined, it is seen that they are first distributed to provinces close to the Syrian border and then to other cities, especially metropolitan cities, in line with their own wishes and purposes. It is known that the excessive number of immigrants in areas near the Syrian border is due to the geographical situation. The main purpose of these people who come to Turkey and spread to different cities is to be in a safe environment to live and to gain an economic freedom that can survive. These people, who give up their regular lives and the material savings they get and take refuge in a country and culture they don't know, are forced to fight poverty in the countries they go to. This applies not only to Turkey, but also to other countries that take asylum seekers. The process of migration and economic hardship is difficult for refugee families, but even more difficult for refugee students. This migration, which suddenly increased the demand for housing in the cities and created many economic changes, created a mutual interaction between both refugees and local people. Housing and rental prices increased in provinces bordering Syria, and both local people who did not own a house and asylum seekers were negatively affected by this situation (Akcan, 2018: p.70). The housing problem that arises as a result of economic conditions is a factor that makes life difficult for asylum seekers.

When the concepts of city and migration are examined in the context of the purpose and scope of the study; the city is a residential area that has a denser population than villages and has reached a certain size and level of integration, where a large part of its economy is based on non-agricultural activities (Keles, 1980, s. 67; Kiray, 1998, s. 28). Migration, on the other hand, is the act of spatial displacement that occurs as a result of changes in the political, social, cultural and economic structures of social formations and the network of relations within these structures and causes extensive transformations on the relevant structures. However, this is not a simple change in a place that people have only done through geography. It is a grueling process that encompasses the whole life of immigrants and re-arranges human and spatial relations altogether, and whose effects are felt for generations (Kaygalak, 2009: p. 9; Adiguzel, 2020: p. 195).

In this mixed method study in which the data were collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaires, the economic and social problems experienced by Syrians in Turkey were examined, and then the findings of the study conducted with 83 out of 111 students in the sample of Osmaniye Korkut Ata University were explained and interpreted. It has been concluded that the Syrian students who came to Turkey through forced migration live under difficult financial conditions and their financial situation affects their participation and adaptation to social life. It is predicted that as their participation in the economy increases over time, the improvement in their income facilitates their adaptation to Turkish society and the tendency of these people towards the participation of social areas in Turkey increases.

## 2. Syrians in Turkey: Economic and Social Problems

Like every forced displaced refugee, the primary goal of Syrians in the countries they go to is not to lead a good life, but to nutrition, shelter, health, security and basic human needs. In this context, the attitudes and policies faced by these displaced persons in the countries in which they have gone are important for their lives. The inability of these people who migrated in a great chaos to meet their basic needs is considered as an understandable situation and many countries and institutions provide different opportunities according to their economic competence. One of the main sources of aid to refugees is vital needs such as financial and social assistance, housing, health, security services and education. Especially in Turkey, almost all of these aids are offered as quickly and regularly as possible through the official institutions and NGOs.

Children were the most affected by the Syrian civil war. Children who have to leave their country with their families also take on some responsibilities in the places where they migrate. Children who resist economic hardship due to forced migration work in fields and gardens in rural areas, and in urban areas in workshops or on the streets. In Turkey, especially in the provinces of Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kilis and Hatay, which are located on the Syrian border, there are many Syrian child workers, and these children work as cheap workers in textiles, fruit factories, shoe workshops and repair shops. Many also sell things such as water and tissues in the streets (Akpınar, 2017, s. 23).

Another employment problem is the deterioration of regional employment balances. Syrian asylum seekers are recruited at a cost of about 50% less than the domestic insured worker. This process inevitably creates pressure on the indigenous people to be dismissed or unable to get a job. Therefore, it can be considered that Syrian asylum seekers are perceived as a threat to the employment of local people, especially in the cities along the Syrian border (Üstun, 2016, p. 7). Another employment problem is illegal workers. Many and especially small businesses employ illegal workers and this practice is widespread. Therefore, there is a conflict caused by unfair competition between these firms that illegally employ Syrians and avoid the necessary legal payments and firms that do not employ illegal workers. (Orhan and Gündoğar, 2015, p. 8).

According to data from the Ministry of Interior, Directorate Immigration Management Office, Turkey received 256,971 Syrian foreigners in 26 temporary housing centers in 10 provinces. As of September 16, 2020, 59,877 Syrians under temporary protection were housed in 7 temporary housing centers in 5 provinces. Additionally, 3,559,041 Syrians with temporary protection live outside temporary shelters (goc. gov. tr, 2020).

Housing is a critical and essential need for everyone. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to address the needs of people who are necessarily displaced. In this context, numerous studies have been conducted on the housing situation of temporary protected foreigners in Turkey, which has attracted the attention of many researchers, particularly from official institutions. According to a study of Syrian women, security is the most popular feature in temporary housing centers, while the most disliked feature

is that tents and containers in centers are not designed for the climate of the region. Ventilation and cooling problems, lack of living spaces suitable for women's needs, lack of adequate female staff, lack of interpreters and water shortages (especially the inability to provide continuous hot water) are considered critical failures in centers (Barin, 2015, p. 31-32).

The majority of the Syrian people in Turkey live among the Turkish people. According to the data of the Directorate General of Migration & Management, only 59,877 people out of 3 million 600 thousand Syrians, ie 1.7% of the total number live in the shelter and 98.3% in the public (goc.gov.tr., 2020). Therefore, these people who are outside the temporary housing centers meet their housing needs by their own efforts. In general, those who have been able to participate in the economic system live in rented houses, while a small part meets their housing needs in places such as barracks and slums.

The most important social problem caused by Syrian refugees is the marriage of Turkish men with young Syrian refugees, regardless of whether they are married or single, young or old. The provinces where this event is most experienced are Hatay, Kilis and Şanlıurfa. The increase in this situation has caused the reactions of the local population, particularly women, and a deterioration of the family unit. Research shows that divorce cases have increased due to Syrian brides in all three provinces. Another social issue caused by Syrian asylum seekers is child labor, which is caused by economic hardship. A small number of Syrian children living outside the camps can be educated and most children are forced to work with their families. This situation disrupts the employment balance in regions with large numbers of refugees. Another fear of the populations living in the cities close to Syria is the emergence of a demographic change and the sense of insecurity it creates. People, who do not want to be a minority as a result of the excessive increase in the refugee population, are concerned. This effect is seen especially in the cities of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa (Orhan and Gündoğar, 2015: p. 16-17).

Some Syrians, on the other hand, isolates themselves from society because they do not speak Turkish and avoid interacting with the society. For this reason, Syrians generally socialize with members of their families and other Syrian refugees, and the problems encountered are trying to be resolved through the efforts of family members and informing other Syrian refugees.

Some Syrians are isolated from society and avoid interacting with people because they cannot speak Turkish. As a result, Syrians generally socialize with their families and other Syrian refugees and solve issues among themselves when they encounter a problem. Social exclusion not only restricts social life, but also limits the use of opportunities in other areas such as education, work, housing, harms people's lives and feelings of control, and also causes material and moral problems to emerge (Gunes Aslan ve Gungor, 2019: s. 1622-1623).

### **3. Method of Research, Collection and Analysis of Data**

In this section, the findings of the research conducted to determine the economic and social problems experienced by Syrian refugee students studying at Osmaniye University in Turkey are analyzed. In this research conducted with Syrian students at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, we investigated the processes of adaptation to a new country, a new culture, the effects of being a student during the migration process, leaving behind the students' financial savings, assets, lands where they lived and grew up. In this study, we tried to understand the Syrian students' thoughts about their own future, the economic problems they experience in urban spaces, how much they are affected by these problems and how poverty is reflected in their social lives. In our study, we tried to find answers to the health conditions of the students, whether the environment they live in (home, dormitory, apartment) was suitable, the effects of the negativities they experienced on their psychology, their future concerns and the various difficulties they were in.

The scope of the study consists of Syrian students who had to migrate to Turkey due to internal conflict, ethnic and religious violence, threats, political instability and street conflicts in Syria after 2011 and are currently studying at universities in Turkey. The sample of the study consists of students (83 students) from the Syrian Arab Republic who study in different departments at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University in Osmaniye.

In-depth qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires were used to obtain data from the study, and the research was conceived as a mixed approach. From a total of 111 Syrian students enrolled in different departments of Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, 10 students were interviewed with a scale consisting of semi-structured questions, and then 73 students were reached and a questionnaire consisting of 53 questions was conducted. The first 20 questions of the survey were aimed at determining the demographic and economic status of the students, and the other 33 questions were prepared according to the 5-point Likert scale. In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency, cross table, and the Kruskal Wallis Test technique were used to test whether the mean of two or more samples differ significantly from each other.

### **4. Findings**

In the findings section, the demographic information about the participants was examined under five sub-headings within the scope of the relationship between the approach to economic problems and the parents' job status, the method of meeting basic needs, the amount of daily spending and the status of having Turkish citizenship.

The names of 10 students who participated in the in-depth interview were coded as E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7 for male students, and K1, K2 and K3 for female students. Four of the participants study in political science and public administration, two in economics, one in electrical and electronic engineering, one in energy systems

engineering, one in food engineering and one in civil engineering. Participants migrated from Latakia, Aleppo, Idlib, Damascus, El-bab and Hama cities. The average age of the participants was 21. In the survey conducted for Syrian students at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, 73 out of 111 Syrian students, 42 male students and 31 female students, were reached. 58.9% of these students were between the ages of 18-22, and 41.1% of them were between the ages of 23-27. 28.7 per cent of participants study in the Faculty of Economics and Administration, 63 per cent in the Faculty of Engineering and 8.2 per cent in the Department of Turkish Language and Literature. 17.8% of participants were in the first year, 27.4% in the second year, 28.8% in the third year and 26% in the last year. As for when participants immigrated to Turkey, 79.5 percent migrated between 2011 and 2015, the first years of the war, and 20.5 per cent in 2016 and the following period.

#### 4.1 Daily Expenditures of Syrian Students and Economic Problems

In this section, the relation between the average daily spending limits of Syrian students at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University and their approach to economic issues is discussed. This section explains the relationship between students' ability to attend classes at the university due to their clothing, accommodation, food needs and financial difficulties.

**Table 1:** The averages of responses of the participants  
to the scale statements according to their average daily expenditures

Statements	Average Spending per Day	%	N	Median	sd	X <sup>2</sup>	p
Sometimes I can't attend classes for financial reasons.	6-10 TL	16,4	12	45,04	4	9,759	0,045
	11-15 TL	32,9	24	42,06	4		
	16-20 TL	24,7	18	24,97	4		
	21-25 TL	12,3	9	39,78	4		
	26-30 TL	8,2	6	32,33	4		
	30 TL	5,5	4	25,38	4		
I am struggling to buy clothing because of financial difficulties.	6-10 TL	16,4	12	56,79	4	16,594	0,002
	11-15 TL	32,9	24	39,58	4		
	16-20 TL	24,7	18	26,61	4		
	21-25 TL	12,3	9	34,67	4		
	26-30 TL	8,2	6	32,67	4		
	30 TL	5,5	4	20,63	4		
I find it difficult to buy food due to financial difficulties.	6-10 TL	16,4	12	51,00	4	11,863	0,018
	11-15 TL	32,9	24	41,67	4		
	16-20 TL	24,7	18	28,89	4		
	21-25 TL	12,3	9	30,67	4		
	26-30 TL	8,2	6	32,67	4		
	30 TL	5,5	4	24,25	4		
Housing rents are expensive for my family.	6-10 TL	16,4	12	39,13	4	17,317	0,004
	11-15 TL	32,9	24	43,54	4		
	16-20 TL	24,7	18	37,42	4		
	21-25 TL	12,3	9	40,61	4		
	26-30 TL	8,2	6	21,17	4		
	30 TL	5,5	4	5,13	4		

In Table 1, participants' daily expenditures on transportation, nutrition, stationery and clothing are analyzed. 16.4% of the students who participated in the questionnaire spent between 6-10 TL, 32.9% spent 11-15, 24.7% spent 16-20 TL, 12.3% spent 21-25 TL 8.2% spent 26-30 TL and 5.5% spent more than 30 TL respectively. Especially in areas such as attending classes, meeting the need for clothing, accessing food products, and housing rent, statistical differences were determined according to daily spending limits depending on this variable.<sup>iii</sup>

For example, it is seen that there is a significant difference according to the average daily expenditure in case of not being able to attend the courses at the university due to lack of money ( $p = 0.045 < 0.05$ ). It is understood that the biggest problem is the group that can spend between 6TL and 10 TL per day (median. = 0.045) and the group who can spend 11 TL-15 TL on average (Medy. = 42.06). Based on these findings, given that participants cannot afford to pay their daily expenses at university, they find it difficult to attend classes.

Similarly, it is seen that the participants with low average daily income experience difficulties in meeting the clothing needs ( $p=0.002<0.05$ ) and purchasing food products ( $p=0.018<0.05$ ) in the city where they live. There is also a statistically significant difference between house rentals and average daily spending capacity ( $p=0.004<0.05$ ). As spending capacity increases, the perception of spending decreases as economic conditions improve (those that spend 30 TL or more  $M=5.13$ ).

Considering the findings of in-depth interviews with 10 students in addition to the answers given in the questionnaire; the students interviewed stated that they generally had difficulty in purchasing food products and that they mostly consumed food products such as pasta, eggs and potatoes. Stating that they were very careful while spending their limited income, the students emphasized that they avoided sitting in any restaurant or cafe outside. Students who have difficulties in purchasing clothing products stated that they can shop several times a year and usually wear the same clothes. So regarding the process:

*"If I can raise money, I can buy clothes once a year or something, it's a piece or two, and I normally wear the same clothes." (E8)*

*"In the first years we came to Turkey, we did not have any money to buy clothes, then we started to make money when my family started to work in temporary jobs, although not often, I can buy clothes once or twice a year." (K2)*

*"We usually eat pasta at night at our student residency. In the morning, we have potatoes or eggs. We can't get a wide variety of food products. "Markets are expensive, we have limited money, and we must use our money moderately." (E5)*

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<sup>iii</sup> During the second half of 2020, when the research was conducted, the TL equivalent of USD 1 is 7.20 TL. According to Purchasing Power Parity, 6-10 TL corresponds to approximately 3 dollars, 11-15 TL to 5 dollars, 16-20 TL to 7 dollars, 21-30 TL to 9 and 30 TL to 12 dollars.



*"I had a lot of trouble in my early years of school, there were times when I didn't have the money to get on the bus. However, I subsequently earned a scholarship. When I became a bursary recipient, I was financially relieved." (E3)*

#### 4.2 Findings on the relation between the method of addressing the basic needs of Syrian students and their approaches to economic problems

In this part of the study, the findings regarding the relationship between the method of meeting the basic needs of the families of Syrian students and the ability to meet the costs of housing and how they spend their expenses are included. At the same time, the findings regarding the financial situation of the students were also included.

**Table 2:** Participants' responses to scale statements according to how their families meet their basic needs

Statements	The Method of Meeting the Basic Needs of the Family	%	N	M	sd	X <sup>2</sup>	p
I have difficulty in meeting the dormitory-house fees in the city I live in.	Working	54,8	40	37,13	2	6,294	0,043
	Through public assistance	23,3	17	45,41	2		
	Using our current savings	21,9	16	27,75	2		
I usually spend my expenses only for my basic needs.	Through working	54,8	40	32,44	2	6,064	0,048
	Through public assistance	23,3	17	46,24	2		
	Using our current savings	21,9	16	38,59	2		

According to the results in Table 2, there is a significant difference between the way the family meets the basic needs and the answers given to the scale expressions. Significant statistical differences emerge between employees and those who use their current savings and those who live on public assistance.

Among the interview participants, it is understood that those who receive scholarship and whose parents are qualified to continue their teaching or civil service in Turkey and continue their profession in Turkey are economically more comfortable and more self-confident than those who work in unemployed or unskilled jobs. Therefore, it is possible to say that the economic gains of family members are directly effective in the social life of the student. Regarding the economic process, the participants:

*"My family is still in Syria, and they work, and I work in a hotel during the summer. So, my financial situation is good, I can't say I'm in trouble, I have many friends here." (E4)*

*"Our situation was very bad when we first came to Turkey. I and my brothers had temporary jobs. But, over the years, we started to recover financially. I currently give private classes in English, Arabic and Turkish to those in need. "That's how I try to satisfy my needs." (K1)*

*"I am a recipient of the DAFI grant, I meet most of my needs thanks to this grant. But I have to be careful how I spend my money. If required, I support my brothers and sisters financially." (K3)*

*"In the first years I came here, I started a free course to learn Turkish, but some days I could not continue because I did not even have money for a bus. Later, when I began my university studies, I obtained a 750 lira scholarship from YTB. This scholarship has been a great relief to me." (E3)*

### 4.3 Findings about the relation between the employment situation of the parents of Syrian students and their approach to economic problems in Turkey

In this part of the study, the findings on the relationship between the professions of the parents of Syrian students in Turkey and the economic problems of the students are included.

**Table 3: Father's employment status and economic issues**

Statements	Father's job in Turkey	N	M	sd	X <sup>2</sup>	p
I have difficulty in buying books, notebooks and stationery products required for university.	Unemployed	33	39,94	8	16,354	0,038
	Worker	12	49,50			
	Office job	2	13,50			
	Farmer	1	5,50			
	Self-employed	7	32,50	8		
	Doctor	1	5,50	8		
	Teacher	4	29,50	8		
	Engineer	2	13,50	8		
	Father is not in Turkey	11	34,41	8		
I am struggling to buy clothing because of financial difficulties.	Unemployed	33	41,86	8	15,602	0,048
	Worker	12	48,88	8		
	Office job	2	16,50	8		
	Farmer	1	16,50	8		
	Self-employed	7	28,93	8		
	Doctor	1	16,50	8		
	Teacher	4	27,88	8		
	Engineer	2	16,50	8		
	Father is not in Turkey	11	29,09	8		
Our monthly salary is not sufficient for living. We live under limited financial conditions.	Unemployed	33	44,89	8	17,362	0,027
	Worker	12	37,38	8		
	Office job	2	24,00	8		
	Farmer	1	7,50	8		
	Self-employed	7	35,86	8		
	Doctor	1	7,50	8		
	Teacher	4	15,75	8		
	Engineer	2	12,50	8		
	Father is not in Turkey	11	33,55	8		
My family cannot sufficiently	Unemployed	33	37,30	8	22,177	0,005
	Worker	12	40,21	8		

benefit from health services in Turkey.	Office job	2	9,50	8		
	Farmer	1	9,50	8		
	Self-employed	7	31,00	8		
	Doctor	1	9,50	8		
	Teacher	4	26,75	8		
	Engineer	2	9,50	8		
	Father is not in Turkey	11	55,14	8		

When the answers given by the participants to the survey questions were examined, it was determined that another variable that made a difference in terms of economic factors was the work of their fathers in Turkey. According to the results in Table 3, it is seen that there is a statistically significant difference compared to the father's job in Turkey in terms of difficulty in purchasing stationery products required for the university ( $p = 0.038 < 0.05$ ). It is possible to say that the group experiencing the greatest difficulty in this regard are those whose fathers are employed ( $M=49.50$ ) and those whose fathers are unemployed ( $M=39.94$ ). (The mother's profession was not included as a variable, as the outcome of the analysis of the mothers' profession in the study was insignificant).

A statistically significant difference was found in purchasing clothing products in the city where the participants were compared to their fathers' jobs in Turkey. Students whose fathers are unemployed and workers have more difficulty in purchasing clothing than other professions.

According to the results in Table 3, for example, there is a statistically significant difference between having difficulty in purchasing stationery products for university and the father's job in Turkey ( $p=0.038 < 0.05$ ). It is possible to say that the group experiencing the greatest difficulty in this regard are those whose fathers are employed ( $M=49.50$ ) and whose fathers are unemployed ( $M=39.94$ ). As in previous results, there is a statistically significant difference according to father's job in terms of family's inability to benefit from health services in Turkey.

Among the interviewed students, E5's father continues to work as a teacher in Syria, E4's parents continue to work in Syria, E1's father passed away, E2, E3, E6 and K2's father is unemployed, K3, E7's father works in unskilled daily jobs. The siblings of the students also work in many different jobs in order to support their family budgets. In the statements of the participants about their economic situation in Syria, they stated that they are at a middle or high level according to the Syrian conditions, but that they have lost all their savings. It turns out that the civil war and the subsequent migration movement caused an economic collapse for them and their families.

#### 4.4 Turkish citizenship of Syrian students and their approach to economic problems

In this part of the study, findings on the relationship between the Turkish citizenship status of Syrian students studying at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University and their economic status are included.

**Table 4:** Average income of families according to having Turkish citizenship

Turkish Citizenship and the average household income per month	Have you become a citizen of the Republic of Turkey?	What Is Your Family's Average Income?						Total
		We do not have a fixed income	between 501-1000 TL	between 1001-1500 TL	between 1501 - 2000 TL	between 2001-3000 TL	3001 TL and above	
Yes		%16,7	%8,3	%8,3	%25	%25	%16,7	%100
No		%27,9	%19,7	%21,3	%14,8	%11,5	%4,9	%100

According to the results in Table 4, which examines whether the participants have Turkish citizenship or not and the average income of their families, the average income of the families of the majority of the students was between 1501-2000 TL (25%) and 2001 TL-3000 TL (25%). For those who are not citizens of Turkey, some of them do not have a fixed income (27.9%), while the income of those with a fixed income varies between 501-1000 TL. According to these findings, families of immigrant students who were able to obtain Turkish citizenship are in a better position economically than those who did not obtain citizenship. This result is important in terms of showing the areas that Turkey should focus on in developing immigration policies.

**Table 5:** Turkish citizenship and average daily expenditure

Turkish citizenship and average monthly income of families	Have you become a citizen of the Republic of Turkey?	How much are your average daily expenses?						Total
		6-10 TL	11-15 TL	16-20 TL	21-25 TL	26-30 TL	30 TL and above	
Yes		%16,7	%16,7	%33,3	%8,3	%16,7	%8,3	%100
No		%16,4	%36,1	%23	%13,1	%6,6	%4,9	%100

Table 5 shows the expenditure status of students with Turkish citizenship as well as students without Turkish citizenship. At the Table 5 shows, students who are citizens of Turkey have better spending conditions. 33.3% of student citizens can spend 16 to 20 TL per day. 16.7 percent spend between 26 and 30 Turkish Lira. For non-Turkish citizens, day-to-day spending is lower. The majority of these participants may spend 11 to 15 TL a day.

**Table 6:** Turkish citizenship and urgent needs

Turkish citizenship and urgent needs	Do you have Turkish citizenship?	Do you have an urgent need to be met?				Total
		Financial support	Job	Language course	I don't have any urgent need	
Yes		%25	%33,3	%33,3	%8,4	%100
No		%26,2	%19,7	%23	%31,1	%100

The students' urgent needs and their status as citizens are assessed in Table 6. According to the results, the greatest needs of students with Turkish nationality are to find

employment (33.3%) and to learn Turkish (33.3%). The most urgent need for non-Turkish citizens is financial assistance. The high rate of requests for language lessons by Syrians of Turkish nationality, can be interpreted as they want to have a desire to speak Turkish fluently.

**Table 7:** The relationship between Turkish citizenship and problems encountered in Turkey

	Do you have Turkish Citizenship?	What challenges did you face in Turkey?					
		Shelter	Social Exclusion	Material Inadequacy	Security	Adaptation	Language
Turkish Citizenship and Problems Encountered in Turkey	Yes	%0	%0	%0	%8,3	%0	%16,7
	No	%8,3	%1,6	%21,3	%0	%6,6	%13,1
	Do you have Turkish Citizenship?	What challenges did you face in Turkey?					
		Expensiveness	Exclusion and integration	Financial inadequacy, integration and language	Financial inadequacy, language and expense	Soc exclusion, integration, language and expensiveness	I do not have any problem
	Yes	%8,3	%0	%33,3	%0	%16,7	%0
	No	%3,3	%3,3	%21,3	%14,8	%9,8	%3,3

33% of students who are Turkish citizens experience financial inadequacy, problems with adaptation and language. 16.7% of the students stated that they had problems with social exclusion, adaptation, language and cost. The most basic problem of students who could not become citizens is financial inadequacy (21.3%). Another 21.3% evaluates financial insufficiency, language and expensive together.

According to the findings obtained from the students in the interview, the transition of Syrian students to Turkish citizenship relieves them psychologically. They stated that some situations restricted by the temporary protection regulation affected them negatively.

*"When I gained Turkish citizenship, I started to feel more comfortable and safe. I had a temporary protection ID card before and felt worthless. Now I feel more secure in every field. However, when I became a citizen, the scholarship I received was cut off, which affected me negatively."* (K2)

*"Not having Turkish citizenship is a big disadvantage. I find a job to work in hotels in the summer, I want to go to a different city from where I live. However, I can get a 15-day leave from the immigration administration. This prevents me from working. Therefore, it causes my financial situation to deteriorate."* (E6)

According to the in-depth interviews and survey findings, the three most important factors that shape the social lives of Syrian refugee students enrolled in Osmaniye Korkut Ata University are income status, language and social behaviors they are exposed to in the city. Financially, it is difficult for students with less daily expenses or limited spending to attend classes and pay the rent of the dormitory or house they live in. Likewise, it is seen that these students have difficulties in purchasing clothing and

food products. Families that make a living through public assistance are more likely to spend only on basic needs than those who work or have accumulated savings. These students are more likely than others to have difficulty paying the rent of their dormitories or houses. Therefore, children of families receiving public assistance continue their education processes in more difficult conditions than children of families who can work. One issue that the participants insisted on in the interviews is the attitude and behavior of the local people they encounter in the cities. Students, most of whom live in Hatay with family members, emphasized that when they first arrived in Hatay, they were subjected to exclusion and verbal abuse by some people. However, students who stated that they did not encounter such a situation in the city of Osmaniye think that they encounter more negative attitudes in Hatay as the effects of the dense Syrian population. In another study on Syrian students studying at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, it was found that students had language problems, financial problems and socialization problems in the first years, but it was emphasized that these problems could be overcome in time (Harunoğulları et al. 834, p. 219).

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

When the income, expenditure and general financial situation of Syrian students studying at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University are examined, it is seen that the situation of meeting their economic needs in the city varies according to different conditions and characteristics. Economic hardship is a situation experienced by most Syrian refugee students. Most of his students' parents are unemployed or in unskilled jobs. Therefore, Syrian students continue their education and daily life in the cycle of income-related problems. Similarly, one of the most important factors affecting the social lives of students under temporary protection is the inability to have sufficient financial gain. At the heart of the fact that they cannot gain a place in the social sphere in the city where they live, or that this process is difficult for them, these students do not want to spend their limited income, their obligation to be frugal, and the psychology of the inferiority they feel. In the in-depth interview, the students emphasized the life between home and university, only basic food expenditures and the absence of social life. Children of families living on public assistance can only meet their basic needs. At the same time, the vast majority of students urgently need financial support and employment. The biggest obstacle for students to participate in social life is that they isolate themselves from outside due to financial concerns. Another important issue is that students have problems in expressing themselves in social areas in the cities they live in or in communicating with people in urban areas. On the basis of this situation, the attitude of the local people towards the Syrians is another determining factor. The presence of people who are intolerant and marginalizing towards them distance themselves from the outdoors. As part of the findings from the in-depth interview, it is possible to say that the healthy adaptation of Syrians to society has been achieved in four stages. The first stage is to recognize the social and cultural characteristics of the new society involved, the second

stage is to get used to the society involved and show similar behavioral characteristics, the third stage is to accept themselves as a member of the society involved, and the last stage is to ensure fair participation in life with society as a whole.

Obtaining Turkish citizenship relaxes students in terms of their future plans. But with students or family members who have gained citizenship unable to find work and now out of temporary protection, cutting benefits paves the way for them to need financial support. The resulting discord drives them into poverty. The study shows that the economic problems experienced by Syrian students as a result of refugees trigger social problems and affect each other. In Syria in 2011, these students were children and grew up in Turkey for 10 years. If these students are sent back later, they will experience the psychology of displacement again.

Although Syrians tend to adapt to Turkish society, it is important to develop social policies to further facilitate this integration. It is another important issue to expand the trainings in order for, these people to have a better command of the Turkish writing and speaking language, to be familiar with the Turkish legal system, which behaviors are ethical for Turkish society or not, and to prevent attitudes contrary to the traditional behaviors of the cities they live in. At the same time, it will be useful to develop and disseminate extracurricular activities in which Turkish students and Syrian students can participate in activities together. In addition, another important issue is that since Turkey is constantly affected by migration flows, adding an immigration course to primary or high school course curricula will contribute to raising awareness of immigration in our society.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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