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A Study on the Perception of Turkish and Syrian Children of Each Other in Preschool Period: "Tell Me About Your Friend"

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Abstract
This paper aims on revealing the perceptions of 5-6-year-old Turkish and Syrian children sharing the same classroom environment in a preschool education institution by use of metaphors. The study was designed in the phenomenology pattern, one of the qualitative research methods, and conducted with 34 Turkish and 22 Syrian children in the 5-6 age group who receive education in the same kindergarten. The study data were obtained through a semi-structured open-ended form and the content analysis method was used in the assessment of the data. The examination of the study data indicates that Turkish and Syrian children expressed several common metaphors such as 'tree, mother, sky, game, toy, playing, cat, mirror, dog'. However, children attributed different meanings to the metaphors they expressed in common. On the other hand, the study determines that Syrian children created more metaphors with positive meanings compared to Turkish children. The study has a very significant purpose in terms of understanding how the preschool-age children of Syrian families living in Turkey perceive their friends in the schools they attend, and how Turkish children perceive these immigrant children in their classes from the perspectives of both sides. Understanding the perceptions of Syrian immigrant children and Turkish children about each other is critical in terms of guiding educators, decision-makers, and policymakers in order to prevent unfavourable behaviours in schools where children study together, create a positive classroom-school climate, and support an intercultural approach for social peace.

Keywords: Immigrant Children, Multiculturality, Respect for Differences

1. Introduction

The concept of migration is defined as crossing an international border or moving within the borders of a state (International Organization for Migration-IOM, 2009). The migration process results in changes in the homogenous structures of societies and brings the needs and problems of different groups in society such as immigrants, guests, foreign students, and refugees to the agenda. Throughout history, people have migrated or had to migrate for different reasons. These reasons include economic reasons, negative changes in the political structure of the country, security concerns, war, and better living conditions (Çiçekli, 2009; Koçak & Terzi, 2012). Immigration takes place for different reasons and such reasons change the term used to refer to immigrants. Despite the similar appearance of the words refugee, asylum seeker, and immigrant, these terms are different and might

also be confusing. Refugees are defined as people who have to leave their home country in order to escape from negative attitudes, persecution, and political and religious abuse, and are not likely to return (Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Roxas, 2010). Asylum seekers are defined as people fleeing from persecution or conflict and therefore under international protection (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees - CRSR, 1951). Refugee applicants are recognized as asylum seekers by the United Nations and can benefit from refugee rights. The term immigrant is considered an umbrella term covering these two groups (Fennelly & Flaherty, 2017).

One of the most significant immigrant crises affecting the international community regarding immigration in the last century has been the refugee crisis in Syria. Following the conflicts that broke out in Syria as a result of the protests called "Arab Spring", Syrians have started to migrate to neighbouring countries since March 2011. The military conflicts experienced resulted in great demographic changes in neighbouring countries, especially in Syria. The statements indicated that a large part of the Syrian population has had to migrate from the country, and therefore there has been a great increase in the number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries (Betawi, 2019; Duruel, 2016).

Among the countries neighbouring Syria, Turkey ranks first in receiving the highest number of immigrants. The geopolitical location of Turkey has caused it to host immigrant groups from various cultures for different reasons (İçduygu et al., 2014). As of April 2021, there are 3,670,342 Syrian refugees in Turkey and approximately 47.4% of registered Syrian refugees include children in the 0-18 age group (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Directorate of Migration Management-DGMM, 2021; The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees-UNHCR, 2021). Adult immigrants tend to be more successful than children in adapting to their new places and creating a safe environment for themselves. Şengül (2019) suggests that the perspectives of children towards the world are affected by their experience of forced migration. A possible outcome of such a situation is that children in the developing age are affected by the sociocultural differences they encounter in their new place of living, the uncertainty of the place they will settle in, and their inability to benefit from health services adequately and this effect is expected to leave traces throughout their lives (Beter, 2006; Şeker & Aslan, 2015). In terms of minimizing such consequences, the inclusion of children from disadvantaged environments into the environments of education starting from the preschool period is of utmost importance in improving their negative situations and their process of adapting to normal life.

Preschool education institutions are multicultural environments where children bring the cultural diversities of themselves and their families. Children are known to be able to notice racial differences from a very young age, they begin to observe racial prejudices in the preschool period, and certain children obtain distinct prejudices by the age of 4-5 (Young et al., 2021). Carlsson-Paige and Lantieri (2005) state that children tend to notice and comprehend differences as part of their natural development in early childhood as they begin to realize their own identities and form a common identity. Divrengi and Aktan (2010) point out that "Who am I?" and "Who are you?" are among the basic questions that children aged 3-6 seek answers to. Therefore, the preschool education environment not only facilitates the child's adaptation to society in a balanced way (Kuru, 2016; Ateş & Şahin, 2021; Haktanır, 2014) but it also offers significant opportunities for the children to get to know different cultures. In this process, they observe the differences and similarities between people and begin to form a unique perception of personal and social identity including distinctive features such as gender, ethnicity, age, and status with an increasing awareness as of birth (Robinson & Diaz, 2006; Nsamenang, 2004). This period also includes the ages when children begin to distinguish between different cultural identities. "Who am I?" and "Who are you?" seem to be among the basic questions that children aged 3-6 seek answers to (Divrengi & Aktan, 2010). Studies also indicate that children begin to distinguish differences in physical appearance (Fontanella-Nothom. 2019; Hear-Garris, 2018), language (Coelho et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2020; Wagner et al., 2014), cultural identity (Mertan, 2011) and social status (Vandebroeck, 2021) from a very young age.

Schools are the most significant institutions where children socialize, develop their physical, cognitive, and social processes, and learn social rules and it is the place, especially where immigrant children have the opportunity to be included in society (Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Sabah, 2007). Schools play a critical role in the settlement of refugees and asylum-seeking children, the development of their sense of belonging, and their adaptation to the new country (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). At the same time, schools act as a bridge for immigrant children to carry themselves to the future and interact with society (Rousseau & Guzder, 2008).

Despite the fact that the school environment of the new society in which immigrant children stepped offers a stable and safe environment, the children may have several problems in adapting to the school. Sudden and difficult migration processes they experienced, having different backgrounds and cultural characteristics, and not sharing a common language are various factors that may lead to these problems. The exclusion and bullying experienced by children alienate children and result in a decrease in their educational success (Hart, 2009; Rutter, 2003). The quicker the immigrant children are accepted by the children with whom they share the same class, the better will be their adaptation to the class-school, the manner of explaining themselves, and their academic success (Şeker & Sirkeci, 2015). In a study conducted in Turkey, it was determined that Syrian children who make friends with Turkish children learn Turkish well and have a high level of adaptation to the city they live in (Yalçın, 2017). Brody et al. (2006) conducted a longitudinal study with African and American children and observed an increase in perceived discrimination that resulted in an increase in behavioural problems and depressive behaviours. Another study with African and American children was conducted by Seaton et al. (2009). The relationship between children's perceptions of racial discrimination and racial identity was tested. In this study, racial discrimination is observed to be negatively related to social respect. At the same time, perceived racial discrimination is believed to be related to negative views of society.

As in all other education levels, more support from the host society is needed in preschool education institutions for immigrant children to adapt to the classroom and life. The ability of these children to forget the negativities they experienced is closely related to the attitudes of other children and teachers in their classrooms and other families they interact with (Gabrielli & Impicciatore, 2021; Esen, 2020; Gökmen, 2020).

Uzun and Bütün (2016) examined the problems faced by Syrian refugee children in preschool education institutions in Turkey. Accordingly, the conclusion was reached that Turkish families are uncomfortable with the education of immigrant children and their children in the same environment, and teachers do not fully adopt.

Syrian children as their students. Szente et al. (2006) state that in-class experiences and teachers' attitudes influence the adaptation process of refugee students in the United States. Özger and Akansel (2019) observed that the process of exclusion of Syrian children started as a result of the negative perspective of Turkish parents towards immigrant children and that while there was no discrimination between Syrian and Turkish children in the first years of school, Turkish children who were under the influence of their families began to display bad behaviour after a while.

This situation shows that Turkish children and teachers, who are the peers of Syrian children in preschool education institutions, have significant duties in their cultural adaptation of them, the creation of healthy educational environments, the adaptation of children to society, and their language learning. Kuru (2016) states that the examination of developmental characteristics of the preschool period points out that the concept of prejudice has not yet developed, and children are affected by the judgments of their parents, teachers, and the society they live in. Parents consciously or unconsciously convey their own attitudes to their children and negative attitudes and discourses towards individuals from different ethnic origins may be taken as an example by children (Foundation for the Evaluation of Women's Labor (KED), 2006).

Özger et al. (2019) observed in a study with Syrian children in a preschool class that Turkish parents' negative attitudes towards Syrians harm the relationship between Turkish children with Syrian children. On the other hand, it was pointed out that the children of Turkish families who have a positive perspective on Syrian children demonstrate the opposite approach. The issue that Syrian children do not know the spoken language, do not follow the rules in the classroom and have cultural differences that affect eating habits brings along conflicts in communication and fights within the classroom after some time.

Ouyang et al. (2021) observed in a study with South Korean children aged 3-5 and their fathers in which children from different races were shown to the South Korean children that the children had positive perceptions on these children from different races, but the perceptions of their fathers were negative. This study is significant in terms of reducing the prejudices of fathers against different races and supporting the positive emotions of children.

The studies also show that the negativities experienced during the immigration process affect the social-emotional development, education, and friendship relations of children (Kolay, 2021; Elvis, 2019; Avara, 2019; Buyurgan & Asal, 2018; Ekinci, 2008). The fact that they do not know the language of their new country may cause uneasiness, fear, and feeling of exclusion. At the same time, children who share their schools, playgrounds, and countries with refugee children, observing or hearing about the negativities experienced during the immigration process may cause them to have negative attitudes towards refugee children (Avcı, 2020; Kılınç, et al., 2018; Şentürk, et al., 2017; Ergin & Ermağan, 2011).

In the preschool period, children can perceive and interpret judgments and situations differently, and they can express this through metaphors. Kemal (2003) stated that metaphor is a clear expression of how people perceive the world and their thoughts about objects and events. Morgan (1980) states that metaphor reflects the way people understand the world. The literature review shows that there are metaphor studies conducted for understanding the perceptions of children. Kılınç et al. (2018) gathered the metaphors of Turkish and Syrian children on understanding their perspectives on the concept of migration, by using the interview form, through one-on-one interviews with the children in Turkish language. Doğan et al. (2020) obtained the perceptions of children about the concept of game through metaphors. Karademir and Demirel (2020) obtained preschooler children's perceptions of teachers through the metaphors they produced. Yazıcı et al. (2018) attempted to determine the perceptions of children attending preschool education institutions in Turkey, Bulgaria, and Cyprus regarding the concept of school through metaphors. The aim was to embody the abstract perceptions of children through several metaphor articles created with children in the literature (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

The study is significant in terms of better understanding the impact of the events experienced and encountered by refugee children in the immigration process from both sides and different perspectives and contributing to the integration of children into society by creating classroom-in-school activities, and a positive classroom-school climate. In this direction, the study aims to reveal the perceptions of 5-6-year-old Turkish and Syrian children who share the same classroom environment in a preschool education institution, by use of metaphors.

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

The study was designed in the phenomenology pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology is a design used to reveal individuals' experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they attach thereto regarding a phenomenon (Annells, 2006; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

In this study, the phenomenology design was used as it allows to explain in-depth the metaphors of Turkish and Syrian immigrant children's perceptions of each other in the same educational environment and the reasons for choosing these metaphors.

2.2 Population and Sampling

The study was carried out in the kindergarten of a primary school selected through impartial assignment among the schools with Syrian children attending preschool education in one of the provinces in Turkey where Syrian immigrants live the most. It was conducted with 34 Turkish and 22 Syrian children in the 5-6 age group receiving education in the same kindergarten. Turkish children are 15 boys and 19 girls and Syrian children are 10 boys and 12 girls, and all children receive preschool education for the first time.

2.3 Data Collection Process

The data were obtained through a semi-structured open-ended form. During the formation of the data collection tool, studies in which metaphors were used to reveal perceptions were examined (Doğan, 2017; Kaya, 2014; Pesen, 2015; Şentürk, et al., 2017). In order to reveal the perceptions of Turkish and Syrian children participating in the study towards each other, Turkish children were asked "Your new friend/friends from Syria resemble/resembles or is/are like... because ..." and their answers were noted and Syrian children were asked "Your friends in your

new class resemble/are like ... because ..." and their answers were noted. The interviews were performed with the children one by one in the natural environment of the classroom and in Turkish. All the Syrian children in the study understood Turkish but some of them had difficulties speaking. In the interviews with these children, support was received from an Arabic-speaking interpreter. During the data collection process, the children did not experience any difficulties in answering the questions asked in concrete terms.

2.4 Research Ethics

At the beginning of the study, necessary permissions were obtained from the institution, the teachers of the classes in which the study was conducted, and the families of the children participating in the study in order for performing the study with the children attending the school. Before the data collection process, families were interviewed one by one and informed in this regard. In the interview to be conducted with the children to be included in the study, both families' opinions about the question to be asked and their consent for allowing the children to participate in the study were obtained. Similarly, interviews were conducted with the teachers and their consent was obtained as well.

In the study, certain measures were taken during the data collection process in order to prevent the attention of children to be drawn to the issue of ethnic or racial compatibility in a negative manner. Following the direction of a few questions about their Turkish friends, Turkish children were asked about their Turkish friends. In the interviews with Syrian children, after asking them a few questions about their Syrian friends, a question was asked about their Turkish friends, and then the interview continued about their Syrian friends. In the interviews performed during this process, in order not to create racial prejudice, Syrian children were referred to as *your new friend/friends from Syria in your class* instead of *Syrian child* and Turkish children were referred to as *your friends in your new class* instead of *Turkish children*.

2.5 Data Analysis

In this study, the content analysis method was used for assessing the obtained data. The main objective of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can clarify the collected data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The analysis and interpretation of the metaphors created by the children were carried out in five stages as naming (1), classification (2), category development (3), providing validity and reliability (4), and transferring the data to the computer environment (5) (Çelikten, 2006; Saban, 2009; Taşdemir & Taşdemir, 2011; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The phase of determining the codes and themes related to metaphors was performed separately by three researchers. During the coding phase of the data, each expression was examined. Afterwards, the coding of the three researchers was reviewed and their compatibility was checked. The similarity rate was used to calculate the reliability of the coding made by the researchers. This similarity, also called internal consistency in the Miles and Huberman (1994) model and conceptualized as the consensus among encoders, was calculated using the formula *Agreement (Agreement+Disagreement) X 100*. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a reliability calculation of 70% or more is considered reliable for qualitative research. In this study, the concordance was calculated as .84 and the conclusion was reached that the categories determined according to the researchers' opinions were highly consistent.

3. Findings

In the study aiming to examine the views of preschooler Turkish and Syrian children on their perceptions of each other, the findings obtained from the metaphors created by the children about each other are analyzed and given in subtitles.

3.1. Turkish Preschooler Children's Perceptions of "Syrian Child"

The themes obtained from the metaphors that Turkish preschooler children have created regarding their perceptions of the "Syrian child" are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The metaphors of Turkish preschooler children regarding their perception of "Syrian child"

Categories	Metaphors	f
School and friends at school	Ritan (4), Ahmet (2), Berat (1), School (1), Boy (1)	9
Animal	Cat (2), Lion (1) Elephant (1), Turtle (1), Dog (1), Rabbit (1)	7
Nature	Sun (2), Tree (1), Sky (1), Water (1)	5
Family	Mother (1), Cousin (1)	2
Game/Toy	Playing (4), Toy (1)	5
Other	Thief (1), Snowman (1), Robot (1), Train (1), Eye (1) Mirror (1), Turk (1), Syria (1)	8
Total		**36**

The metaphors created by the Turkish children participating in the study about the "Syrian children" were categorized as *school and friends at schools, other, animal, nature, game/toy, and family*.

Category of School and Friends at School. It is seen that the metaphors of *Ritan* and *Ahmet* are expressed the most under this category, followed by the metaphors of *Berat*, *School*, and *Boy*. Under this category, among the Turkish children, the opinion of C1 was "*Syrian children are like Ritan because Ritan is a Syrian child*", while the opinion of another child, C2, was "*Syrian children are like school because I like my school very much*". C3 expressed his/her opinion on the perception of Syrian children as "*Syrian children resemble Ahmet because he does not speak at all*".

Category of Animal. Cat metaphor was used the most under the category of animal. *Cat* metaphor is followed by the metaphors of *lion, elephant, turtle, dog,* and *rabbit.* Examples of the thoughts expressed by Turkish children about this metaphor include the opinion of C4 as "*Syrian children look like turtles because the faces of Syrian children are always the same, like turtles*", C5 as "*Syrian children look like cats because their eyes are like the eyes of cats*", C6 as "*Syrian children are like rabbits because they do not speak like us*", and C7 as "*Syrian children are like elephants because elephants are very big and they walk slowly*".

Category of Nature. In this category, the metaphor of *Sun* was used the most. Followed by the metaphors of *tree, sky,* and *water*. Examples of the thoughts expressed by Turkish children in the metaphors created in the category of nature include the opinion of the C8 as "*Syrian children are like trees because the leaves of trees are falling, they are like them*", C9 as "*Syrian children are like the sky, they resemble the clouds, there are too many of them*", C10 as "*Syrian children resemble water because the water flows*".

Category of Family. In this category, the metaphors of *mother* and *cousin* were created. Examples of the thoughts expressed by Turkish children in the metaphors created include the opinion of C11 as "*Syrian children are like mothers because mothers gave birth to them*".

Category of Game/Toy. In the category of game/toy, the metaphors of *playing* and *toy* were created. Examples of the thoughts expressed by the children about the metaphors created include the opinion of C12 as "*Syrian children are like toys because they have the same clothes as we have the same toys*", C13 as "*Syrian children are like playing because I get bored while playing*", and C14 as "*Syrian children are like playing because I like playing games*".

Category of Other. The metaphors in the category of other include *thief, snowman, robot, train, eye, mirror, Turk,* and *Syria*. Examples of the thoughts expressed by the children about the metaphors created include the opinion of C15 as "*Syrian children are like snowmen because snowmen are not beautiful, like Syrians*", C16 as "*Syrian children are like Turks because Turks love them very much*", C17 as "*Syrian children are like trains because the train takes them away*", C18 as "*Syrian children are like robots because we cannot understand what they say, like we cannot understand what robots say*".

3.2. Syrian Preschooler Children's Perceptions of "Turkish Child"

The themes obtained from the metaphors that Syrian preschooler children have created regarding their perceptions of the "Turkish child" are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The metaphors of Syrian preschooler children regarding their perception of "Turkish child"

Categories	Metaphors	f
Fun and Liked Things	Playing (3), Candy (2), Cat (1), Dog (1), Game (1), Toy (1), Painting (1)	10
Home and School	Mother (2), Teacher (1), Home (1), Sibling (1), Mother-father-child (1)	6
Nature	Cloud (1), Tree (1), Sky (1)	3
Other	Mirror (1), Glass (1), Rope (1), Are you okay? (1)	4
	TOTAL	**23**

The metaphors created by the Syrian preschooler children participating in the research about "Turkish children" were categorized as *Fun and Liked Things, Home and School, Nature,* and *Other*.

Category of Funny and Liked Things. Playing and *Candy* are the most common metaphors created by Syrian children about "Turkish children". Among the metaphors created, there are the metaphors of *cat, dog, game, toy,* and *painting"*. Examples of the thoughts expressed by the children about the metaphors created include the opinion of C19 as *"Turkish children are like cats because Turkish cats are very beautiful.",* C20 as *"Turkish children are like games because they too many.",* C21 as *"Turkish children are like playing because I have fun with them.",* and C22 as *"Turkish children are like painting because I love them"*.

Category of Home and School. The most selected of the metaphors created under this category is *mother,* followed by *home, teacher, sibling,* and *mother-father-child.* Examples of the thoughts expressed by the children about the metaphors created include the opinion of C23-34 as *"Turkish children are like mothers because mothers protect",* C25 as *"Turkish children are like teachers because teachers love",* C26 as *"Turkish children are like siblings because I have few siblings, they are my siblings",* and C27 as *"Turkish children are like mother-father-child because they are a family"*.

Category of Nature. Under the category of nature, the metaphors of *tree, cloud,* and *sky* were created. Examples of the thoughts expressed by the children about the metaphors created include the opinion of C28 as *"Turkish children are like the sky because they resemble the sky",* C29 as *"Turkish children resemble clouds, because they are like the sky and I am like Syria",* and C30 as *"Turkish children are like trees because trees bloom"*.

Category of Other. Under the category of other, there are metaphors of *mirror, glass, rope, how are you,* and *are you okay*. Examples of the thoughts expressed by the children about the metaphors created include the opinion of as "*Turkish children are like a rope because they are very few*" and C32 as "*Turkish children are like "How are you, are you okay?" because they always ask like that*".

3.3. Common Metaphors Used by Turkish and Syrian Preschooler Children

Themes obtained from the common metaphors used by Turkish and Syrian preschooler children are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Common Metaphors Used by Turkish and Syrian Preschooler Children

Metaphor	f
Playing	5
Mother	3
Tree	2
Cat	3

Game	3
Mirror	2
Dog	2
Sky	2
Toy	2
Total	24

Among the metaphors created by Turkish and Syrian children, *tree*, *mother*, *mirror*, *cat*, *dog*, *sky, game, toy,* and *playing* are common metaphors. For example: Regarding the metaphor of *tree*, the opinion of the Turkish child was "*Syrian children are like trees because the leaves of the trees are falling, they are like them*", while the opinion of the Syrian child was "*Turkish children are like trees because the trees bloom*". Regarding the metaphor of *cat*, the opinion of the Turkish child was *"Syrian children are like cats because they hurt cats"* while the opinion of the Syrian child was "*Turkish children are like cats because Turkish cats are very beautiful*". Regarding the metaphor of *game*, the opinion of the Turkish child was "*Syrian children are like games because I like playing games*" while the opinion of the Syrian child was "*Turkish children are like games because I have fun with them*".

4. Discussion

The metaphors obtained as a result of the study provide us with important clues about how Turkish and Syrian children who attend the same preschool education classes perceive each other. 59 metaphors were created from a total of 56 Turkish and Syrian children participating in the study. When metaphors are categorized, the most common categories of metaphors for Turkish children are *school and friends at school*, *other*, *animal*, *nature*, *game/toy*, and *family*. During the categorization of the metaphors created by Syrian children, it is observed that *fun and liked things*, *home and school*, *other*, and *nature* were the most selected ones. It has been determined that some metaphors such as *tree, mother, sky, game, toy, playing, cat, mirror,* and *dog* are expressed jointly by Turkish and Syrian children (Table 3).

The examination of the results show that the metaphors created by Turkish children sometimes contain negativity. Similar results were obtained in the studies conducted on the perceptions of Turkish children towards Syrian children in schools at various educational levels. Seker and Sirkeci (2015) also support this finding of our study. Researchers state that immigrant children have difficulty in making friends at school due to their different lifestyles and limited language skills. However, they stated that Turkish children did not want to accept immigrant children at the beginning, while the immigrant children felt that they were foreigners in the new environment. Şentürk, et al. (2017) reached the conclusion that in the immigration metaphor created by 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th-grade students, students mostly used negative metaphors and that the negative events in the region led to this. Similar results were obtained in our study. Negative metaphors such as "*Syrian children are like snowmen because snowmen are not beautiful, Syrians are like that*" were created.

In the metaphor analysis study on immigrants, conducted by Alivernini et al. (2019) with 840 eighth grade students attending Italian schools, the conclusion was reached that Italian children created metaphors that expressed negativity, such as something disturbing or annoying about immigrants. At the same time, it was stated that male students had more negative feelings than female students.

Özger et al. (2019) observed in a study with Syrian children in the preschool class that Turkish parents' negative attitudes towards Syrians harm the relationship of Turkish children with Syrian children. On the other hand, it was stated that the children of Turkish families who have a positive perspective on Syrian children demonstrate the opposite approach. The issue that Syrian children do not know the spoken language, do not follow the rules in the classroom, and cultural differences affecting eating habits brings along conflicts in communication and fights within the classroom after a while. Kara et al. (2016) examined students' perceptions of the concept of Syrian refugees in their study with university students. As a result of the study, it was determined that12.9% of them had a positive perception and 87.1% of them had a negative perception towards Syrian refugees.

Karagözoğlu (2017) conducted a study with secondary school students and 204 students from different secondary schools participated in the refugee metaphor study. The conclusion was reached that the most created metaphors about refugees by the secondary school students participating in the study were *bird* (12.74%) and *coward* (7.35%) with negative content. Brown (2011) examined children's attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in his study with American children aged 5-11 years. As a result of the study, the conclusion was reached that American children have negative attitudes towards immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants. Hartley et al. (2021) stated in their study with children aged 10-12 living in Western Australia that they exhibit prejudiced attitudes towards asylum seekers-refugees and avoid interacting with refugee children. At the same time, it was stated that positivity towards refugees-asylum-seekers increased, and attitudes of prejudice decreased in children in the short and long term, thanks to the intervention program implemented. Brody et al., (2006) conducted a longitudinal study with African and American children and observed an increase in perceived discrimination that resulted in a rise in behavioral problems and depressive behaviors.

Another study with African and American children conducted by Seaton et al. (2009) tested the relationship between children's perceptions of racial discrimination and racial identity. In this study, it was observed that racial discrimination is negatively related to social respect. At the same time, perceived racial discrimination is thought to be related to negative views of society.

Rodriguez (2021) reached the conclusion that immigrants may be exposed to racialization in the interactions of teachers and students in schools, as a result of which youth experiences are negatively affected and they feel worthless. Violante et al. (2020) concluded in a study with American preschoolers that children consider English-speaking individuals who were born and raised in the USA as Americans rather than individuals who immigrated to their country. Becker et al. (2022) concluded in a study with children living in Switzerland and Poland that children demonstrated negative attitudes and behaviours towards immigrants living in their countries and this circumstance did not have any difference from the attitudes of their parents. Demintseva (2020) stated in her study with children in Russia that there are children of different ethnic origins in these schools, where certain schools are perceived as immigrant schools. It has been concluded that children make a distinction between immigrant children and themselves as "us and them".

Another result of this study is the creation of metaphors with more positive meanings such as *mother*, *home*, *game*, and *teacher* by Syrian children. Another study conducted with older age groups shows that similar positive metaphors emerged. Akkaya (2013) revealed the perceptions of Syrian refugees learning Turkish in Turkey about the Turkish language through metaphors. The study showed that Syrian refugees mostly used the metaphors of *mother*, *home*, and *human*. According to this result, it was stated that Syrian refugees have a positive perception of the Turkish language. Following the examination of the metaphors created in the study, it was concluded that the Syrian refugees came to an orderly environment from chaos, and they subconsciously trusted the Turks and Turkey.

Süzen (2020) stated that refugee children from other countries consider Turkey as a hand of compassion, a place of reliance and shelter. Avcı (2020) concluded that Syrian refugee children feel safe in Turkey. Archakis (2016) reached the conclusion that the immigrant students of Albanian origin who immigrated to Greece had positive attitudes and discourses towards Greeks who shared their country and schools with them. From this point of view, we can reach the conclusion that the positive metaphor used by Syrian children in our study may be related to their gratitude and embarrassment towards Turkish children with whom they share their classrooms, toys, and meals. The studies show that negative expressions against immigrants are seen in other countries of the world that accept immigrants as well.

Şengül (2019) shows that children's perspective on the world is affected by the forced migration they have experienced. The fact that children consider Syria and Turkey as equals demonstrates that they are not affected at the same rate as adult immigrants in this process. One of the remarkable results of the study is that Syrian and Turkish children attach different meanings to the same metaphors. For example, regarding the metaphor of the *tree*, the Turkish child expressed his/her as "*Syrian children are like trees because the leaves of the trees are falling, they are like them*", while the Syrian child expressed his/her as "*Turkish children are like trees because trees bloom*".

Kılınç et al. (2018) collected the metaphors they created for understanding the perspectives of Turkish and Syrian children against the concept of migration in Turkish language through one-to-one interviews with children. The results of the study indicate that Turkish children use the metaphor of 'to reach' as to go and Syrian children as to move. A significant result of the study seems to be that Turkish and Syrian children define the concept of migration in different ways, and the negative events they experience have a significant impact on their perspectives on this issue. Another finding is that the negative perceptions of Turkish children may be caused by the attitudes of the adults around them and especially their families. For example, a Turkish child said, *"Syrian child is similar to Ritan because Ritan is a Syrian child, I do not play with Syrian children, my mother told me they are not your friends, do not play with them".* Another Turkish child said, *"Syrian child is like playing with Ritan because Ritan is a Syrian friend of mine",* while another Turkish child used the expression *"Syrian child is like Ritan because Ritan is my Syrian friend".*

We can tell that children are under the influence of their families and close circles in terms of prejudices, as in many other issues. Studies show that preschooler children begin to become aware of racial differences under the influence of the adults around them, and they may create prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviours against different races and individuals through imitation (Beneke & Cheatham, 2019; Jordan & Hernandez-Reif, 2009; Kaufman & Wiese, 2011).

5. Suggestions

1. Based on the results of this research, the following recommendations may be made:

2. Various educational activities can be organized to support Turkish and Syrian children to develop more positive relationships with each other. Educational programs may be developed in this regard.

3. The results may be compared by conducting similar studies in schools where there are fewer Syrian immigrant children.

4. The relationships between these groups may be examined by comparing the perceptions of teachers and families with the perceptions of Syrian immigrants and the perceptions of children.

5. In-service training may be given to teachers on the integration of immigrant children into the classroom and the integration of children sharing the same class.

6. Families and teachers may be trained on respect for differences and multiculturalism.

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