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## Position of the Syrian refugee children in printed media

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### Abstract

*Associated with globalization, transformation and mobility all around the world may result in positive and negative impacts on welfare of the countries as well as on psycho-social and economic positions of the individuals. Especially in under developed and developing countries, such effects are more evident. The individuals living in these countries are forced to leave their homeland and become refugees in some other countries due to social, economic, psychological and environmental effects. Migration process has become a threat for physical, psychological, social, economic and cultural development of these children at present and in the future. This study is a content analysis on the position of Syrian children and how they are mentioned in three mainstream newspapers in Turkey (March-April-May 2016). These newspapers are Star, Hürriyet and Cumhuriyet. Only headlines were analyzed and columns were not taken into consideration. News from these papers are categorized according to subjects and contents and then sub-categories were composed. How Syrian children in Turkey have been generally mentioned, on which occasions they have been mentioned and which of their problems have been stated in printed media were analyzed in this study.*

**Keywords:** Refugee children; immigration; war; Syrians; printed media.

### Introduction

Due to its geographical, strategic, cultural and political position, Turkey has faced mass population inflows several times in her history. The ongoing political instability and conflicts in Turkey's geography are the most important factors promoting immigration to Turkey. Interms of migration movements, until lately Turkey was considered a "transit country"; however, nowadays with the influence of the recent humanitarian crises Turkey has become a "destination country" (DGMM-Directorate General of Migration Management, 2015).

Civil commotions that started in Tunisia in 2010 and then spread to other Arab countries and included demands for democracy, freedom and human rights, which are described as the Arab Spring, have caused significant changes in the political, social and economic structures of many countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Bahrain. Likewise in Syria in 2011, the political and ideological groups, which for many years were

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suppressed by the regime, first protested and then attempted armed insurgencies. In this process, about 6.6 million Syrians have been displaced within Syria and more than 5 million of others found safety in immigrating to neighboring countries and beyond (Yucesahin and Sirkeci, 2017). Turkey has granted "Temporary Protection Status" to those Syrians who entered the country within the framework of the "Open Door Policy" (Kaya, 2015).

The number of Syrian refugees, who have immigrated to Turkey during the post-Syrian civil war period, when the largest refugee crisis after the Second World War is encountered, is increasing day by day. According to "First Annual Report on the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (March 2017)", Turkey "has been hosting the highest number of refugees and migrants in the world, numbering more than 3 million. It includes about 3 million registered Syrian refugees of which 10% reside in 26 camps established by the Turkish government in the south-east of Turkey, while the remaining 90% live outside of camps in urban, peri-urban and rural areas." Syrian refugees in Turkey, who constitute the largest refugee population in a single country, face many problems at the level of basic needs (Orhan and Gündoğar, 2015). With the increase in immigration beginning with the first inflows in 2011, the challenge of meeting the basic needs of the Syrians living in Turkey in the context of human rights has become the subject of intense public debate. In this context, the issue of meeting the basic needs of the Syrians, who live in Turkey, such as health services, education, housing, nutrition and socialization has been brought into the agenda. Nevertheless; the protection and working conditions of Syrian children and women, the situation of Syrians living outside the camps and in the camps (Çağlar ve Özkır, 2015), social cohesion and conflict, xenophobia, employment and labor exploitation, demographic change of cities, ethnic and sectarian tensions in domestic politics have become subjects of public debate in Turkey as an effect of the immigration (Kaya, 2015).

War in Syria has especially affected children and women. These people have been forced to leave their homeland and have had to adapt to a different life in countries they had moved to. Through this process, they have experienced and faced housing, nutrition, adaptation and education problems. During all these processes, the most vulnerable group is the children who have experienced crucial turning points in their lives. As a matter of fact, according to the United Nations reports, women and children constitute a large portion of immigrants. Majority of the people who are forced to migrate, within or between countries around the world, are women and children. Children are often exposed to situations like being separated from their families, becoming orphans, experiencing inadequate nutrition, illness, and dehydration or sometimes are injured and



traumatized due to the minefields set as per the warfare conditions (Thomas, 2008, cited in Kaya, 2015).

The concept of immigration, firstly refers to the mass movement of a certain population from one place to another; however, it is more complicated than a simple change in geographical location (Aksu and Sevil, 2010). In Turkey, there are many refugees who left their homeland Syria due to internal conflicts and sought asylum here in Turkey. As Hemmasi and Prorok (2002) suggest, women, children and the elderly are those who have been affected by migration to a great deal.

In 2013, approximately 180,000 Syrian refugees were living in the camps while the vast majority was trying to survive outside the camps (Doğanay and Çoban Keleş, 2016). More than 53% of Syrians living in Turkey are children under the age of 18 and 75% of them are children and women in need of protection. The largest age group of Syrians in Turkey was between 19 and 54. After that, the second most populated age group is between 0 and 12 (Erdoğan, 2014). Children between the ages of 0 and 18 constitute the 53% of the population in the camps and 49% of the population outside the camps. This percentage indicates that Syrian children are higher in population among all the Syrians (AFAD, 2013). Also according to 2015 data of UNICEF; 1,923,240 registered Syrian children were living outside the camps (UNICEF, 2015). According to April 2014 report of Middle East Strategic Research Center, Syrians living in camps were found to be in better conditions than the ones living outside the camps (2014). Syrians living outside the camps face many problems regarding safety and security, food, housing and health. Some NGOs and civilians have tried to address these problems. All positive and negative attitudes were reflected in the media.

Mass media has affected individuals' opinions. Media causes bias among people and shapes their opinions and judgements (Wodak and Reisigl, 2005). Dijk (2005) also stated that mass communication devices plays a decisive role on individuals' views and ideologies. According to ICAR's report dated April 2004, British media has broadcasted sensational news on refugees and has not revealed the actual issues (ICAR, 2004).

The media with its positive and negative news content reflected the problems of Syrian refugee children as well as pointing out activities to raise these children's moods; also statements of politicians from Turkey and abroad regarding the Syrian refugee children were published. The media, taking into consideration the events and the people involved, has evaluated and acted according to social context and culture. Ardiç Çobaner (2015) stated that it is frequently controvert how media presented the events and individuals on issues related to human and children's rights. He indicated



that the presentation of children on media is a reflection of how children are viewed in the dominant culture, and this affects the behavior and attitude of the society towards these children, as well as decisions taken regarding these children.

Mass communication tools and printed media have decisive impact. Authors, explaining the role of media on people, stated that individuals' perceptions/ judgements about social classes are shaped by printed media (Wodak and Reisigl, 2005).

In a report of UNICEF (2007) titled "Children's Rights and Journalism Practice- A Rights-Based Perspective", it is indicated that media prepared presentations related to persons, cases, entities and phenomena /facts; and these presentations did not reflect the reality squarely. Again, in the same report, it is stated that the way children were presented on the media reflected the perception of children in the culture they belong to, and the attitude and behavior towards children may be manipulated.

With reference to this conceptual background, news on Syrian children in March and April 2016 have been analyzed in three major newspapers in Turkey.

## **Data and Method**

The main aim of this research is to determine how the situation of children migrated from Syria and Syrian refugee children in Turkey together with their families as a result of the war in Syria, is portrayed in printed media. The ways in which Syrian children represented in printed media were analyzed using the content analysis method. In this study, qualitative analysis method is used to collect information on Syrian children's physical, psychological, social, economic and cultural status. Content analysis is a method of categorization, classification of text in order to reach theoretical results (Cohen et al., 2007). The purpose of content analysis is to explain how an event is represented through texts or visuals (Bell, 2001). In order to better explain the themes of newspaper articles determined by the content analysis method, sample news texts were selected from selected newspapers and the findings were enriched. In general, the following questions were investigated in this study:

1. How the problems of refugee children coming from Syria to Turkey, in the camps and out of the camps, are portrayed in the news texts?
2. What are the reactions of the Turkish people to the refugee children coming from Syria to Turkey, and how are these described in printed media?



3. How and to what extent do the statements of the authorities in Turkey and in the world, on these children and on the situation of these children, are reflected in the printed media?

4. In what way and to what extent, do the affirmative actions established for these children in Turkey are expressed in the printed media?

Within this context, data from March-April-May 2016 issues of three newspapers with high circulation with different political stances were collected: a) *Cumhuriyet*, an opposition newspaper criticising the government, b) *Hürriyet* with a liberal view, and c) *Star* representing a pro-government view. Search was made by using key words *Syrian children, refugee children, Syrian and children* to gather the relevant news items. The research took two months.

In order to analyze the news texts in the newspapers, categories that primarily respond to research questions were formulated. News were categorized in terms of their content as *Problems, Reaction, Statements from Turkey and the World, Life in the Camp, Life out of the Camp*, as well as *Positive News on Children*. Under the category of Problems; Children's Employment/Labor, Health, Education, Conflict, Prostitution, Murder and Events Happening on the Borders of the Country have been examined. Under the category of Reaction; Assault, Social Exclusion, Street Demonstrations and Psychological Violence were examined, while under the category of Statements from Turkey and the World; *Syrian Refugees* and *Statements of Officers from Turkey and the World* were examined. Under the category of Life in the Camp; Abuse, Psychological-Social Support Studies and Neglect and under the category of Life Out of the Camp; Abuse, Security, Neglect, Bombing-Attacks and Suicide were considered. Lastly, under the category of Positive News on Children; Activities for Children, Assistance, Education and Social Support titles were examined.

### Findings of the Survey

In total, 164 news articles about Syrian children have been gathered during the archive search; however, 40 of these news were excluded from the study since they were about other Syrian refugees and they were not directly related to Syrian children. Thus, 124 articles in total were used in this study.

In the period of March-April-May 2016, we found 60 news in *Hürriyet*, 22 news in *Star* and 42 news in *Cumhuriyet* about Syrian children. In the findings listed in Table 1, the frequency of the news about Syrian Children taking place in Daily News, Education, and Health, Economy, Magazine, World, Newspaper Supplements, Politics and Sports sections are



presented. Within the light of these findings, the news on Syrian children was published under Daily News section at most. Education and World sections of newspapers followed this. News mainly taking part under Daily News section indicates that the issue was mainly taken at the national level.

**Table 1.** Sections of news published in terms of newspapers

The section news appeared	Hürriyet	Star	Cumhuriyet	Total
Daily News	24	11	31	66
Education	18	1	2	21
World	9	-	8	17
Newspaper Supplement (page special for the region- life- gallery- media)	4	6	-	10
Magazine	2	2	-	4
Economy	2	1	-	3
Sports	1	1	-	2
Politics	-	-	1	1
Total	60	22	42	124

**Table 2.** Contents of the news articles according to the newspapers

Content of the News	Hürriyet	Star	Cumhuriyet	Total
Social	39	19	34	92
Educational	15	3	2	20
Political	5	-	6	11
Legal	1	-	-	1
Total	60	22	42	124

In Table 2, it is shown that the news published on Syrian children was mainly published with a social content. It is identified that in terms of newspapers; *Hürriyet* published news mostly with social contents followed by educational contents while *Star* published news only with social and educational content. On the other hand, *Cumhuriyet* published news mostly with social and political content.

When the categories of the news topics were examined; the subjects of the news were categorized into *Problems, Reaction, Statements from Turkey and the World, Life in the Camp, Life out of Camp, as well as Positive News on Children*. Each category, then was divided into sub-categories.

#### ***Problems Syrian Children Face***

News from these three newspapers is categorized under Syrian children living in Turkey. This “Problems” category is sub-categorized as child labour, health, education, conflict, apprehension, prostitution, murder and problems on borders.



**Table 3.** News topics in newspapers related to refugee children who came from Syria to Turkey

News Categories					
		Cumhuriyet	Hürriyet	Star	Total
<b>Category 1: Problems Syrian Children Face</b>					
Child Employment/Labor		5	1	1	7
Education		2	1	-	3
Events at the borders of the country		-	3	-	3
Conflict		2	-	-	2
Prostitution		1	1	-	2
Health		1	-	-	1
Anxiety		1	-	-	1
Murder		-	1	-	1
<b>Category 2: Reaction</b>					
Attack/Assault		2	5	3	10
Psychological Violence		-	2	-	2
Social Exclusion		-	-	1	1
Street Demonstrations		-	-	1	1
<b>Category 3: Statements from Turkey and the World</b>					
Stated by Officers From Turkey		3	2	-	5
Stated by Syrian Refugees		1	-	-	1
Stated by Officers from the World		1	-	-	1
<b>Category 4: Life in the Camp</b>					
Abuse		5	2	-	7
Neglect		-	2	-	2
Psycho-social support studies		1	-	-	1
<b>Category 5: Life out of Camp</b>					
Abuse		3	6	1	10
Bombing-Attacks		3	6	1	10
Neglect		6	-	3	9
Security		4	-	-	4
Suicide		-	-	1	1
<b>Category 6: Positive News on Children</b>					
Educational		-	15	2	17
Activities for Children		-	9	2	11
Assistance		1	3	5	9
Social support			1	1	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>124</b>

Syrian families are facing a lot of problems. One of the most important problems is the economical one. Due to language barrier, Syrian people



cannot be employed easily, thus they started working at low paid jobs, consequently all family members, including the children are affected.

*“Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality’s Municipal Police of European Side of Turkey has found Syrian children who were forced to begging or work on the roads between the bus stations of Zincirlikuyu and Beylikdüzü. Municipal Police has sent these children to Pendik Kızılay Dr. Kemal Demir Youth Camp. Municipal Police has also faced some problems with the children who did not wish to go to the youth camp.” (Cumhuriyet, 2nd of March 2016)*

*“Great number of children, trying to contribute to the family budget by collecting recyclable wastes and scraps from the trashes, get into the struggle of life on the streets of İzmir. Omar, trying to express himself with a few Turkish words he has learned, states that his father and his siblings are also collecting scrap on the streets of the city and added: We go to different districts in the morning. We try to bring bread to the family in the evening by selling the scraps we collect. Most of Syrian children like me sell handkerchief or collect scraps. I have difficulty in pulling the trolley but I do not have any other choice.” (Cumhuriyet, 24 April 2016).*

Anxiety and fear are the problems children face seriously due to not being able to speak the language; economic problems, health and educational issues, as well as problems arising from living in a different country are some of the others. In Cumhuriyet newspaper, it is emphasized that people who live in Kilis were worried about the future of their children due to the bombings made to the city.

*“People in Kilis stated that they have a constant concern and dilemma for the psychological situation of their children and also about sending their children to school because of explosions in the region. They indicated that “All the time, we are living with the fear of bombs. Following every bomb, we run to the school to take our children. Now we cannot even send them to school. It’s enough, we want peace. We get tired of living with fear of death. We want to be taken care of. We do not want these bombs on us. We fear to send our children to schools, we cannot open our shops and we even fear to walk on the streets. We cannot even sleep at nights.” (Cumhuriyet, 19th of April 2016).*

Children, being the most affected group from this process and after life of immigration, may face disadvantages resulting from the economic and social factors of the country they have sheltered in, and they may be exposed to abuse and neglect. In Hürriyet newspaper, it is stated that prostitution and marriages at early ages were listed among the negative impacts of war as well as the crimes against humanity.





*“It’s obvious that, before health services, right to live should be provided. Human rights are ignored; young Syrian girls are being marketed in online web sites; they are forced to marry at young ages, they are forced to become co-wife and they are also forced to prostitution. Actually everything that happened after Syrian war is crime against human rights and violation of human rights.” (Hürriyet, 7th of March 2016).*

As Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers are forced to leave their homeland and have experienced problems on borders, from which children especially were enormously affected, sometimes even lose their right to live.

*“The boat carrying 40 asylum-seekers who illegally tried to cross borders from Antalya to Greece sank; some of them are rescued but two girls are found dead.” (Cumhuriyet, 20th of March 2016).*

Within the light of the news on the newspapers in regards to Syrian children, it is observed that children are among the most sensitive groups affected from immigration process, and they were exposed to many negative circumstances at this stage.

### **Reaction**

Under the category of Reaction; there are Assault, Social Exclusion, Protestation, Psychological Violence and Reaction to Government. Many Turkish citizens think that Syrian asylum-seekers create a lot of socio-cultural and economic problems even though the Turkish government has accepted Syrian asylum-seekers. According to ORSAM report (Middle East Strategic Research Center, 2014), especially at border cities local people have very reactive approaches towards Syrians. Sometimes these negative approaches build up and affect children.

*“There are surveillance camera shoots of a peddler who grabbed a Syrian child named Hasan and threw him to the ground. This peddler named Musa D. has been taken under custody by the police at that very night and charged with “deliberately injuring a person” but he was set free under the condition of judicial control decision.” (Cumhuriyet, 13th of May 2016).*

Increasing number of Syrian population in Turkey causes adverse reactions from families whose children share the same environment and get education with these children. Thus, within the context of the cultural structure of the society, some citizens in Turkey marginalize Syrian children and they ignore the rights of those children to be educated.

*“In Kilis, families who do not want the Syrian children to go to school with their own children make protests at the very first day of school. According to acquired information, a new school with 18 classrooms*



*which was built by a businessman named Mehmet Zeki Taşçı is opened on Friday. This morning when the students and families came to the school and learned that school will also educate the Syrian children, started protests immediately.” (Star, 11th April 2016).*

Syrian children were also exposed to psychological violence by some racist people.

*“A Bulgarian citizen in Bulgaria who caught and frightened some illegal Syrian refugee children tried to justify his actions as some kind of sport, “just a hunt for refugee persons” he said. Racist Bulgarian was supported by some citizens. Committees for Human Rights (HCHR) which Bulgaria is also a member, has called Bulgarian authority to action in order to stop this violence. The Committee made the below statement for press: “This person who catches male, female and refugee children and make them stay on the floor for hours and threatens them with death also creates negative opinions for refugees about all Bulgarian citizens.” (Hürriyet, 10th of March 2016).*

*“A joke on bombing, made to a small child of a family who escaped from Syria and settled in Turkey received reactions on social media. The video of the joke shot in Istanbul and shared on social media made everyone’s heart bleed. In the video, sounds of a plane is heard when a little Syrian kid is playing in the playground. Then, a person gets close by the child and tells him that it was a warplane and he should run away. The small kid gets confused, stops his play and starts running. The child leaves the playground and tries to find a hiding place and keeps checking the sky to see if the plane started bombing.” (Hürriyet, 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2016).*

### **Statements from Turkey and the World**

In this category, statements and declarations from Turkish and foreign authorities on Syrian asylum-seekers and on the situation in Turkey following the Syrians’immigration to Turkey have been analyzed.

*“Prime Minister Davutoğlu stated as follows: “We opened EXPO 2016. With my colleagues from all around the World, we visited the camps and we once again saw how these tragedies affected children. They are innocent human beings. They are the most affected ones. There are tens of thousands of Syrian children in Turkey. We all are responsible of taking care of them. As Turkey, we came a long way with UN in dealing with this problem.” (Cumhuriyet, 23rd of April 2016).*

*“The father of 3 years-old Aylan (Alan) whose dead body washed up on to a shore in Bodrum and created massive international indignance has criticized immigration policies of European countries and he has also stated that he was very grateful to Turkish government. The father*



stated that only Barzani and Davutoğlu have helped him.” (Cumhuriyet, 31st of May 2016).

“Organizations on human rights are issuing reports one after another indicating that soldiers in Turkey deployed at the border of Syria fire guns towards the refugees causing injuries and casualties. Human Rights Watch Organization (HRW) announced yesterday that “violent acts of Turkish soldiers, deployed at the border, against Syrian refugees and smugglers ended up with death of five people in total, one is a child, also 14 people injured seriously.” HRW reported seven events in total, six of which were reported from Hirbet el Coz-Güveççi near border crossing, and one from the border county of al-Duriya in Syria; and added “soldiers deployed at Turkish border shot three refugees (one male, one female and a-fifteen-year-old boy) and a smuggler; also they have beaten a smuggler to death.” (Cumhuriyet, 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2016).

### **Life in the Camps**

Although life in the camps seem a secure environment for children, it is stated in various newspapers that kids were facing abuse and neglect in such environments.

According to an Orsam report (Middle East Strategic Research Center, 2014) Syrians living in the camps have better lives than the ones living outside the camps but after analyzing news it seems that there are severe problems in the camps which especially affect children.

“It has been found that sexual harassment cases like the one in Karaman district are also experienced in the camp for refugees in Antep which was visited by Merkel. AFAD, the manager of the camps has given a press statement after the revealing news. AFAD stated that realities of the case have been twisted and there were no good intentions in doing so. 30 boys have been raped in Nizip Camp which is under the control of AFAD who are proud with their motto of “You’re welcome to the country which have been home to most of refugees and asylum seekers in the World”. For 3 months these disgusting harassments took place in the camp but AFAD was not aware of them!” (Cumhuriyet, 11th of May 2016).

“The court case about 8 kids being abused by an officer in the camp in Nizip, established by AFAD for the Syrian refugees, was concluded with verdict of ‘gross negligence’. Ministry of Family and Social Policies had become a party in the court case when it was reported on the news.

A janitor personnel, working in the camp of AFAD in Nizip, was found to abuse Syrian children sexually was the head news of Birgün Newspaper yesterday. The janitor named Erdal E. (29), sexually abused eight children between the ages of 12 to 14 by paying them money in June 2015. In



*August one of the kids told about the sexual abuse to the family and the father filed a complaint.*

*On September 2, 2015 Erdal E. was taken into custody and arrested and sent to prison after the investigation of the district attorney.” (Hürriyet, 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2016).*

*“Canan Güllü (President of the Women’s Association of Turkey) also remarked on the situation of Syrian refugee women, and added that at the very first days of her arrival, she has noticed a written statement in Kilis camp stating that “girls should get married” and emphasized the situation in a camp they visited lately and noted that there was a catalogue categorizing women according to their ages, and everyone from the governor to the police commissioner were aware of the fact.” (Cumhuriyet, 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2016).*

Another issue that has been examined in newspaper surveys is the fires in the camps.

*“Fire broke at the camp which was visited by Bono: 1 Dead and 2 Injured There was a fire at the camp of Nizip in Gaziantep. The camp was visited by famous Irish singer Bono just a day ago. One Syrian child is dead and two people are injured. The reason behind this fire could not be determined yet.” (Hürriyet, 2nd of April 2016).*

*“Fire started in a tent camp, where Syrians live, located on the road to Dumluca Village that is 4 km away from Derik at 03.00 this morning. Fire brigades started fire extinction surrounding great number of tents in a short time; however, three children between the ages of 3 and 8 died, and 6 people were injured.” (Cumhuriyet, 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2016).*

*“In Tel Hammud tent camp located in Ceylanpınarcounty of Şanlıurfa where Syrians lived, a fire started and Muhammed, aged 12, and his sibling EriçŞuayip got injured seriously. They could not be saved despite all the medical efforts made.” (Cumhuriyet, 30 March 2016).*

Although it is widely believed that life in the camp is more comfortable than the life outside the camp, what kids face in the camps are clearly shown in the newspapers.

### ***Life outside the Camps***

According to an ORSAM report (2014) even though in camps basic human needs are provided, most of the refugees prefer to live outside the camps since the camp life is so boring for them.

Many Syrian asylum-seekers have been living outside the camps due to strict entrance and exit hours of the camps and because of their preference to live with their relatives. But in that case they are to experience some difficulties such as low income, social oppression and adaptation problems. Especially children are affected by these economic problems and security



issues. Children living under unsecure conditions are vulnerable to neglect and abuse.

*“Rape Claims in Gebze: mukhtar of Pelitli Neighborhood claims that 57 years old resident (Z.T) of the neighborhood and one other person tried to rape a Syrian boy. Mukhtar stated that this rape case disturbed all the residents and he gave press statements to a lot of journalists.” (Hürriyet, 22nd of April 2016).*

*“In Hatay M.T and V.Z are cudgeled by a market owner who claimed that they stole some pide (a kind of bread). It’s learned that these Syrian children are registered in the Immigration Office and they came to Turkey with their parents. Children expressed that they were very hungry that day. M.T. said “We go out to the streets because we have no bread at home. We went to market and took some bread to pay later. But the owner of the shop and his workers came and started to beat us. We said we will pay but they continued to cudgel us.” (Star, 6st of April 2016).*

*“Prof. Sancar (nobel winnig Turkish scientist) also made statements about Syrian refugees, and added that the Project also targeted the Syrian girls. He emphasized that he hoped the Project would add value in bringing the region peace, justice and welfare. Also he celebrated Women’s Day of all the girls and women. Spokesman of the Project, adopted daughter of Prof. Aziz Sancar, Rose Peifer stated in her speech that there were many obstacles for the girls to access education, added that there was an increase in the number of “child brides”, and said the ratio of Syrian refugees forced to marriages when they were children in Jordan increased from 12 percent to 32 percent.” (Cumhuriyet, 9 March 2016).*

*“Forces of Public Security Branch started a study when they observed that the number of Syrian refugee children collecting waste paper with trolleys increased in the city, and they simultaneously conducted raids to four different storages located in Menderes Neighborhood with the city security forces of the Metropolitan Municipality. Teams started investigation in the storages, which did not have licenses and were used as sleeping quarters. In addition, they found out 282 Syrian children, whose ages varied between 9 and 14, who brought paper wastes they collected for 12 hours in a day with trolleys to the storages and they delivered the wastes against only five TL. Children were taken back to their families, and 85 trolleys found in the storages were seized. Trolleys were loaded to trucks and sent for demolition. The unlicensed storages were sealed by city security forces; and owners of the storages, Ümit Ç., Syrian citizen Fetih Haci A. and Abdülmünem F. were fined.” (Cumhuriyet, 31 May 2016).*



Refugees, living out of the camps for various reasons, face many social and economic difficulties. Children who are seriously affected by this process, had to work or forced to work in hard works due to economic concerns. Besides, children enter many places which are not suitable for them, thus they are vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Negativities children face appeared in many newspapers under various titles.

### **Positive News on Syrian Children**

Especially refugee children are the most vulnerable Syrian group. There are some examples of positive news on Syrian children in Turkey. There are motivational events, supporting activities and educational aid.

*"In Elazığ, 152 successful students, of which 10 are Syrian took part in a Project to discover the science World. Social Support Program (SODES) was organized by Firat University (FÜ) and Ministry of Family and Social Policies. The Project of "Fun Journey to Science by Toy Blocks and Robots" provided education to 152 students." (Hürriyet, 9th of May 2016).*

*"300 Syrian refugee children who continue their education in Reyhanlı in Furkan School come together in an entertainment event. The event is a part of the 23rd of April National Sovereignty and Children's Day activities. Poems read, theater plays and folk dances performed and songs for children were sang. The coordinator of Furkan School, Cengiz Hazırlar made a statement to AA reporter and expressed that Syrian children are cheered up during the event." (Star, 23rd of April 2016).*

*"200 refugee children, victims of Syrian Civil War, watched a movie with their families at the university, and they made a short excursion around the university. At the activity of "Cinema for Peace Foundation and Global Citizen", the Syrian children enjoyed the movie. Kadir Has University hosted the activity and almost 200 Syrian children and their mothers had the chance to visit the university and see the surrounding, as well as enjoying the movie." (Hürriyet, 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2016).*

### **Conclusion**

In this study, news and their content were analyzed on 3 mainstream newspapers in Turkey. The news were analyzed according to which parts of newspaper they have been printed and how they revealed the Syrian children. They were all categorized.

According to some important findings, Syrian families have problems of income and they force their children to work. Also Syrian children work under unsafe working conditions and they are vulnerable to abuse and



neglect. It can be also said that most of the Syrian children are out of the education system because of language problems and economic difficulties.

Some Syrian children in the educational system are not welcomed by the parents of the Turkish children thus the Syrian children suffer from social exclusion. It can be concluded that Syrian children living in the camps are more secure than the ones living outside the camps but there are few cases of abuse and neglect in the camps. It seems that studies on inclusion of Syrian children to the education system are increasing according to the news.

Syrian children living in Turkey and facing adverse events endanger their basic rights as nutrition, housing, security and education. By examining the newspapers chosen as a sample, we can state that more than half of the news on Syrian children published in newspapers are about negativities and difficulties children face. It is understood that sufficient level of information was not provided with these news on the reasons and results of the events Syrian children were exposed to. Some conducted researches emphasize that refugee children were mentioned with hate speeches stereotyped with violence, crime and adverse roles (Buchanan et al, 2003; van Dijk, 2007).

Under the light of the news published, it is observed that the news on abuse and neglect Syrian children faced were very common. Besides the news indicating the adverse events Syrian children lived through, news on activities to lighten the mood of these children also took place in the newspapers.

Children are shown as “victims” and “sufferers” in the news published on newspapers, and it is observed that the measures and precautions need to be taken to ensure benevolence of children are to be emphasized sufficiently. Ardiç Çobaner (2015) identified in a survey he conducted in these newspapers that the news on Syrian refugee children were mainly on negativities such as diseases, death, poverty, starvation, violence, child employment and not being able to access to the education system. In addition, in this research it was identified that the information on the relation between reasons and results of adverse conditions the children are living through and the background data were not provided. Gencil Bek (2005) stated that children rarely took place in the media, and they were presented mainly under issues as crime, violence, accidents and disasters.

At the news published in the newspapers, it is emphasized that Syrian children were forced to work due to economic concerns. Nevertheless, Küçükcalay et al. (2000), state that the children of refugee families with low level of income worked sometimes on their own will and sometimes upon the request of their families to contribute to their family budgets.





Within the light of the news examined throughout the study, negativities children faced within and out of the camps were reflected in different aspects. Especially the children living out of the camps are facing threats in terms of education, shelter and security. It is stated in a report of ORSAM (Middle East Strategic Research Center, 2014) that more than 75% of the refugees were children and women. Most of these people are trying to continue their lives under difficult conditions out of the camps trying to meet their basic requirements such as health, nutrition, shelter and security. Türkiye (2016) indicates that Syrian children living in our country face problems such as child employment, abuse and not being able to access to health services. Erdoğan and Ünver also emphasize that Syrian children in Turkey have serious education problems since they do not know the language (cited in Harunoğulları, 2016).

In a survey conducted, it was identified that education of Syrian children and news on attitudes of native children towards Syrian children were listed among the most important themes. In the same survey, it was stated that one of the most important problems Syrian refugee children faced was child labor and it rarely took place in the news (Ardıç Çobaner, 2015).

As a result, refugee children are portrayed in printed media with some kind of an adverse picture or with the negativities and difficulties they live through due to being both a child and a refugee. In these news, children are shown as “victims”, while there are very few news items offering a factual and reasoned analysis leading to solutions or positive recommendations.

## **Suggestions**

It is observed that most of the news published in newspapers is on victimization of Syrian children. In these news, factual information on relevant institutions and entities are needed to better portray the situation of the children, and to increase awareness to entice benefits for the children. The interests of children need to be cared for in the newspaper articles written on children.

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups. Therefore, studies on improvement of education and health provisions, nutrition and housing conditions for refugee children need to be expanded.

It is very important to regularly support these children’s physiological wellbeing by teams of social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists.

To ensure preventive measures are in place against social exclusion of and negative attitudes towards Syrian children and their families, further studies on integration are needed.





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