

An Investigation of Negative Attitudes Toward the Syrians Under Temporary Protection in Terms of Various Variables

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Abstract

In this study, negative attitudes towards Syrians under temporary protection were analyzed in terms of various variables. The "Negative Attitudes Towards Immigrants" scale was used to collect research data. The study population consists of Küçükçekmece residents, one of the districts with the highest population of the Syrians under temporary protection in Istanbul, the most populated province in Turkey. The study showed that the participants who had had a negative dialogue with the Syrians had more negative attitudes than those who had not. Moreover, it was revealed that negative attitudes differed significantly according to the approach toward political issues and the level of nationalism.

Keywords: *Political Science, nationalism, religiosity, approach toward political issues, negative dialogue, negative attitude.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first mass population movement from Syria to Turkey started when 300-400 Syrian citizens moved toward the Cilvegözü border gate in Yayladağı district of Hatay province on 29.04.2011 with the beginning of the war in Syria in 2011 and the growth of the humanitarian crisis afterward. With the increase in these movements and transforming into a mass form, the “Law on Foreigners and International Protection” was adopted in 2013. Article 91 of this law, titled “Temporary Protection,” states the following: “Temporary protection may be provided for foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country that they have left, and have arrived at or crossed the borders of Turkey in a mass influx situation seeking immediate and temporary protection (Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu, *T.C. Resmî Gazete*, 28615, April 11, 2013).” Within the scope of this law, Syrian refugees who arrived in Turkey by being forced to leave their country have been taken under temporary protection. There have been large mass influxes toward Turkey since 2011, which still continue.

According to the latest data updated by the Presidency of Migration Management in Turkey on 18.12.2022, the number of the Syrians under temporary protection residing in Turkey is currently 3,561,883, and this number is 550,154 for Istanbul (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022, Syrians Under Temporary Protection by Years). Therefore, the ratio of the Syrians under temporary protection to the population of Istanbul is 3.36%, their density in the general population is approximately 4.2% (Turkey's population is 84 680 273 people according to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute for 2021), and the density of the Syrians residing in Küçükçekmece district is approximately 5.37% (Korkmaz, 2021). Hence, the density of the Syrians in Küçükçekmece district is above the average for both Istanbul and Turkey.

Such a large migration flow can affect the economic, social, and cultural structure and threaten the social structure in the security field. The literature review shows that some studies accept perceived threat as a precursor to forming exclusionary attitudes toward immigrants (McLaren & Johnson, 2007; Scheibner & Morrison, 2009; Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015b). Numerous studies indicate that, in case of such an intense flow of refugees, competition can occur in economic, social, and cultural structure areas and this competition can create negative attitudes and prejudices. Three basic theories affecting the attitude toward groups can be mentioned: Realistic Conflict Theory (Allport, 1954; Sherif, 1967), Social Identity Theory (Tajfel et al., 1979; Coenders et al., 2004), and ‘Integrated Threat Theory’ based on the first two theories (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

‘Realistic conflict theory’ assumes competition between people for economic and social benefits. According to Ben-Nun Bloom (2015), minority group members or immigrants can be regarded as potential competitors for material resources, and the increasing immigrant population poses a threat while they compete for scarce material resources (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015b). Social identity theory is based on cultural and social factors shaping attitudes toward and perceptions of immigrants and

refugees. Based on these premises, people belonging to a certain group try to attribute positive characteristics to their own groups to reinforce their self-esteem by comparing them with other social groups. The local population's attitudes toward and perceptions of immigrants are also based on historical, political, institutional, social, geographical, and cultural contexts (Rontos et al., 2022).

Apart from these two theories, the integrated threat theory introduced by Stephan and Stephan (2000) includes four types of threats. These four threats were categorized as realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. Realistic threats consist of threats in real life. Realistic threats are threats to the existence of the ingroup, threats to the political and economic power of the ingroup, and threats to the physical or material well-being of the ingroup or its members. This concept of realistic threat originates from realistic group conflict theory. Symbolic threats are the second type of threat. Symbolic threats are morals, values, beliefs, and attitudes. Symbolic threats are threats to the ingroup's worldview (Stephan & Stephan, 2000, pp. 23-45). The third threat is intergroup anxiety. The idea that anxiety adversely affects intergroup relations emerges in numerous studies (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Gudykunst, 1995; Stephan & Stephan, 2000, pp. 23-45). Negative stereotypes are the last type of threat. Almost all outgroup stereotypes contain threats to ingroups because providing a basis for expectations regarding the behavior of the stereotype group's members is one of the functions of stereotypes (Hamilton, Sherman & Ruvolo, 1990; Stephan & Stephan, 2000, pp. 23-45).

In light of all these data, the present study aimed to examine whether “negative attitudes toward the Syrians under temporary protection” in Turkey were affected by various variables, such as approaches toward political issues, level of nationalism, level of religiosity, and negative dialogue.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Research was done within the framework of the following hypotheses to examine negative attitudes toward the Syrians under temporary protection. To test these hypotheses, the “Negative Attitude Scale Toward Immigrants” developed by Varela et al. (2013) to determine negative attitudes toward immigrants and examine the impacts of these prejudices was employed.

H1.1: With all other conditions being equal, the negative attitude toward the Syrians under temporary protection changes significantly according to the variable of having a negative dialogue with any Syrian.

The question “Have you had a negative dialogue with any Syrian” was asked to the participants, and it was aimed to test whether there was a significant difference between individuals who had had a negative dialogue and those who had not in the context of the participants' responses. According to Allport (1954), one of the most influential theoretical frameworks explaining the relationship between contact and groups, constructive associations formed by people of different ethnic identities, religions, races, and sects reduce prejudices between groups and develop positive attitudes between groups (Allport, 1954). Some studies demonstrate that negative contact between groups leads to negative

attitudes among group members (Barlow et al., 2012; Techakesari et al., 2015). Moreover, some studies have shown that positive contact also creates a positive attitude (Paolini et al., 2014; Hayward et al., 2017). Therefore, a relationship between contact and attitude was expected in the present study.

H2.1: With all other conditions being equal, the negative attitude toward the Syrians under temporary protection changes significantly according to approaches toward political issues.

The question “What is your approach toward political issues? Can you mark your place where 1 means the far left and 5 means the far right?” was asked to the participants, and it was attempted to test whether the negative attitude toward the Syrians changed according to the participants’ level of self-positioning.

The differences between the attitudes of the participants, who position themselves on the right or the left, toward immigrants may result from their individual upbringing styles and intergroup interaction. Additionally, possible differences may also originate from mass interaction. The flow of refugees to Europe started after the crisis in Syria in 2011, and then the far-right parties became stronger and significantly increased their votes in some countries. It is expected that individuals who position themselves on the right will have a more negative attitude toward refugees than others on the grounds that far-right parties make refugees a propaganda tool to acquire an advantage against their opponents and this propaganda can spread to the electorate because similar results are observed upon reviewing the relevant literature (Wilkes, Guppy & Farris, 2007; De Vries et al., 2013; Anderson & Ferguson, 2018; Van Der Brug & Hartevelde, 2021). In this respect, when approaches toward political issues are examined, a significant difference is expected in the current research on negative attitudes between individuals who position themselves on the right and left. However, considering the Turkish sample, there is a different scenario from the sample in some European countries where far-right parties are influential because the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), the ruling partner in Turkey, has the status of a right-wing nationalist party. Since this party is a ruling partner and is a part of the policies developed in the country toward the Syrians, it is observed that it does not engage in negative dialogue with the Syrians and such a program is not included in the declaration prepared for the elections to be held in 2023 (See the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Election Declaration). In this case, it was assumed at the beginning of the study that a negative attitude that might result from mass interaction would not have spread to the supporters of this party and the result might differ from the literature in this context. However, it was not ignored that there might be attitude differences due to individual differences or intergroup interaction.

H3.1: With all other conditions being equal, the negative attitude toward the Syrians under temporary protection changes significantly according to the level of nationalism.

The question “To what extent do you consider yourself nationalist? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-nationalists at all and 5 indicates the most nationalists?” was asked to the

participants, and it was tried to test whether the negative attitude toward the Syrians changed according to the participants' level of positioning themselves as nationalists.

Nationalism is based on the idea that the values, principles, achievements, and interests of its own nation are more important than individual interests and universal principles. This brings about emotional attachment to one's own nation and its fundamental goals. Furthermore, it can be said that nationalist individuals tend to see their country and its values, such as history, culture, civilization, etc., superior to those of other countries. Numerous studies in the recent literature state that there are concerns that possible contact with immigrants will damage many cultural and material values of the local people and negative attitudes are formed in this respect. According to Ben-Nun Bloom et al., perception of cultural threat often creates negative attitudes toward immigrants as a critical part of such group values because immigrants threaten the symbolic social and political power of the natives. Ben-Nun Bloom et al. found that the impact of cultural threat on all ethnic/racial preference measures was positive and statistically significant (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015b, p. 1762). Van der Brug and Hartevelde (2021) examined whether nationalistic feelings and anti-immigration attitudes increased due to the increasing number of asylum applications and found conditional effects, although no universal (across all citizen groups, EU-wide) effects were determined. In Central and Eastern Europe, initially, there is no significant difference between the attitudes of right-wing and left-wing citizens toward immigration. In these countries, the refugee crisis (as reflected in the number of applications in Europe as a whole) was accompanied by a slight but insignificant increase in anti-immigration attitudes among citizens on both sides of the ideological spectrum. In all regions of Europe, adherence to national identity was revealed to be unaffected (Van der Brug & Hartevelde, 2021, pp. 227-247), with the exception of the countries most affected by a large number of refugees (Greece, Italy, and Spain) (Van der Brug & Hartevelde, 2021, pp. 227-247). Jeong (2013) found that 'nationalism, national identity, and national pride' had different effects on attitudes toward immigrants. Moreover, it was revealed that nationalism provoked anti-immigrant sentiment (Jeong, 2013, pp. 1461-1477). In the current study, a relationship is expected between the level of nationalism and anti-immigrant attitudes. Nevertheless, it is thought that the assumptions put forward in H2.1 are also valid for this hypothesis and there is a high probability of a different result from the available literature on nationalism.

H4.1: With all other conditions being equal, the negative attitude toward the Syrians under temporary protection changes significantly according to the level of religiosity.

The question "To what extent do you consider yourself religious? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-religious at all and 5 indicates the most religious?" was asked to the participants, and it was attempted to test whether the negative attitude toward the Syrians changed according to the participants' level of positioning themselves as religious.

There are numerous opinions in the literature showing that the level of religiosity can create negative attitudes and prejudices. Considering these views, there is no common opinion on whether religion causes negative attitudes or prejudices (Altemeyer, 2003, pp. 17-28). Adorno et al. (1950) determined that individuals with high levels of religiosity also had high levels of prejudice (Adorno et al., 1950). According to Allport and Ross (1967), religious people are prejudiced. On average, churchgoers are more prejudiced than those who are not (Allport & Ross, 1967, pp. 432–443). Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) argued that religious fundamentalism could act with prejudice. They also proved that prejudice was associated with the Christian Orthodoxy Scale. Additionally, some studies demonstrate that it is related to some concepts such as religiosity and prejudice, religiosity and intolerance, negative attitudes and xenophobia (Glock and Stark, 1966; Hunsberger, 1995; Paloutzian, 1996; Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997; Johnson et al., 2010; Djupe & Calfano, 2013). Batson et al. (1993) detected a positive relationship between church attendance or other measures of religiosity and racial prejudice. According to Scheepers et al. (2002), the more religiosity is evident in people's lives and the more spirituality they experience, the more they move away from prejudices. However, the stronger people accept religious particularism, the stronger their prejudice is. Brandt and Reyna (2010) stated that they partially agreed with the view that religious fundamentalism was consistently associated with prejudices against various outgroups. Ben-Nun Bloom et al. (2015a) indicated that religious social identity increased opposition to immigrants who did not resemble ingroup members regarding religion or ethnicity, whereas religious belief generated warm attitudes toward immigrants of the same religion and ethnicity, especially among less conservative religious people. Contrary to all these, some studies show that religion can create a positive attitude and prevent prejudice. Billiet (1995) revealed that church involvement had a moderating effect on ethnic prejudice. According to Schwartz and Huisman (1995), religions encourage people to seek meaning beyond everyday life and display attitudes of awe, respect, and humility. Bohman and Hjerm (2014) observed that religious people were, on average, less likely to oppose immigration than non-religious people.

As is seen, there is no common opinion on the relationship between religion and prejudice, and different results have been acquired from field studies in the literature. In the current study, it is expected that the attitudes of the participants with different levels of religiosity toward the Syrians will differ significantly. However, the fact that the local people and the Syrians who arrived in Turkey as guests belong to the same religion, they were part of the same country until the early 1900s, and that there are still strong partial ties of kinship between the two countries weakens this assumption.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research design

In the present study, a survey model, one of the descriptive research designs, was used to "examine negative attitudes toward the Syrians under temporary protection in terms of various variables." In survey studies, information is usually collected from a large population using the answer

options determined by the researcher. In survey studies, researchers are usually concerned with how opinions and characteristics are distributed in terms of individuals in the sample rather than why they originate (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Within the scope of this model, hypotheses were established, the scale was used to collect data from the participants, the reliability of the available scale was tested, and an examination was performed in accordance with the nature of scientific research.

3.2. Data collection tools

Data collection tools consist of two sections, a survey and scale. The first section contains information that will describe the participants' personal characteristics. In the second section, the "Negative Attitude Toward Immigrants" scale, which was developed by Varela et al. (2013) to determine negative attitudes toward immigrants and examine the impacts of these prejudices, was used. The validity and reliability studies of the scale developed by Varela et al. (2013) were conducted with university students. The item-total correlations of the 12-item scale varied between .30 and .65, and Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was .86. Günay et al. (2019) performed the validity and reliability studies for the Turkish version of the scale. As a result of the reliability analyses applied to the scale, Cronbach's alpha value was .81, the split-half reliability was .67, and the item-total test correlation coefficients ranged between .85 and .87 (Günay et al., 2019). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was .95.

3.3. Confirmatory factor analysis

A single-factor structure was examined with regard to the negative attitude scale. There are 12 items to measure negative attitudes in the structure examined. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis, the model fit criteria were investigated, and CMIN=297.845, DF=54, P<0.001, CMIN/DF=5.516, RMSEA=, CFI=0.959, and GFI= 0.914 were obtained. It was revealed that one item differed significantly from the other items. The modification indices were examined because the model fit criteria obtained were not at the desired level. The index analysis also found that the differentiated item had a covariance relationship with other items. According to these determinations, the relevant item was removed from the scale and analyzed. After the item was removed from the scale, the data in Table 1 were obtained as a result of the examination.

Table 1. Fit Index Values Acquired by CFA Analysis

Fit Values	Acceptable Limit	Perfect Fit Limit	Single-Factor Model
X ²			197.246
X ² /sd	The X ² /sd value is below 5	The X ² /sd value is below 3	4.696
CFI	=.95 and above	=.97 and above	.974
GFI	=.85 and above	=.90 and above	.94
NFI	=.90 and above	=.95 and above	.967
AGFI	=.85 and above	=.95 and above	.905
RMR	Between =.050 and =.080	Between =.000 and =.050	.055
RMSEA	Between =.050 and =.080	Between =.000 and =.050	0.78

Considering the values obtained for the said fit indices from the CFA analysis, it was seen that the values CFI=.974, GFI=.94, and NFI=.967 were at the perfect fit limit. Moreover, the values $X^2/sd=4.696$, AGFI=.905, RMR=.055, and RMSEA=.78 were at the acceptable limit. In this respect, it was revealed that the single-factor structure of the Negative Attitude Toward Immigrants Scale was confirmed as a model (For the acceptable and perfect fit limits of fit indices, see: Çokluk et al., 2010).

3.4. Data analysis

Data were collected using the Negative Attitude Toward the Syrians Under Temporary Protection scale and a survey consisting of personal information and analyzed using SPSS 22 and AMOS programs. The analysis showed that the skewness value was -.648, the kurtosis value was -.750 and the data were normally distributed (+1.5-1.5 normal distribution, Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Since the data were normally distributed, the t-test was used for binary variables, and the ANOVA test was conducted for three and more variables. Moreover, the LSD test was applied to determine the source of the difference originating from the ANOVA test.

3.5. Population and sample

The population consisted of the residents of Küçükçekmece district, whereas the sample comprised the participants selected on a voluntary basis. The proportional stratified sampling method was employed for sample selection. The population of Küçükçekmece district is 805,930 people (TurkStat, 2021). There are 21 neighborhoods within the district's boundaries. The cosmopolitan structures of the neighborhoods in Küçükçekmece district differ significantly from each other. There is no homogeneous distribution between neighborhoods for some important conditions, such as the density of the Syrians, socio-economic level, and educational status. Hence, each neighborhood was considered a stratum, and a sample was selected from each stratum according to the population ratio with the proportional stratified method. After the boundaries of the strata were clearly determined, the data in each stratum were collected by a simple random method. Six hundred thirty-three participants agreed to participate in the study voluntarily, and data were collected from them. Twenty-four participants did not fill out the surveys as desired and were excluded from the study. The data from 609 participants were used in the present study.

4. RESULTS

Table 2. The participants' mean scores on the "Negative Attitude Scale"

Scale	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Negative Attitude Scale	609	11.00	55.00	37.10

Considering the participants' scores on the Negative Attitude Scale, it was found that they generally had negative attitudes toward the Syrians under temporary protection (\bar{x} =35.48, min=11, max=55).

Table 3.The participants' "Negative Attitude Scale" t-test results

Variable	Response	N	Mean	Sd	T	P
Have you had a negative dialogue with any Syrian?	Yes	208	40.47	13.90	.778	0.00
	No	401	35.35	12.59		

Table 3 contains the Negative Attitude Scale t-test results. It was seen that the average of the participants who responded "yes" to the question "Have you had a negative dialogue with any Syrian?" (\bar{x} =40.47) was higher than the average of those who responded "no" to the said question (\bar{x} =35.35). Additionally, a significant difference was determined between the participants who responded as "yes" and "no" (t =.778, p <0.05) as a result of the t-test. Thus, hypothesis H1.1 was accepted. The results showed that the negative dialogue was effective in forming negative attitudes.

These data provide valuable insights into how interactions with members of other ethnic groups, particularly negative dialogues, can shape attitudes.

Firstly, respondents who answered "yes" are shown to have a higher likelihood of engaging in negative dialogues with Syrians. This suggests that frequent or more pronounced negative interactions may lead individuals to develop more negative attitudes toward that ethnic group. This aligns with the phenomenon known as "experiential-based attitudes" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006) in social psychology, where personal experiences and interactions play a significant role in shaping attitudes.

Secondly, according to the t-test results, a significant difference was found between the groups of respondents who answered "yes" and "no." This indicates that negative dialogues can indeed influence attitudes toward Syrians, and this effect is statistically significant. This underscores the complexity of relationships between ethnic groups and the impact of negative interactions on attitudes.

In conclusion, these findings shed light on how negative interactions can influence attitudes and highlight the importance of fostering more positive and constructive communication between ethnic groups. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing social policies and strategies for managing intergroup relations, promoting respect for ethnic and cultural diversity, and enhancing empathy and understanding among different communities.

Table 4.The participants' "Negative Attitude Scale" ANOVA test results

Variable	Group	N	Mean	Sd	F	P	Difference LSD
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What is your approach toward political issues? Can you mark your place where 1 means the far left and 5 means the far right?	1	83	36.08	14.33	3.45	0.01*	3-5
	2	45	37.28	11.39			
	3	231	39.08	12.23			
	4	62	38.69	10.96			
	5	188	34.53	14.69			
To what extent do you consider yourself nationalist? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-nationalists at all and 5 indicates the	1	71	35.11	13.48	2.95	0.02*	1-3, 2-3, 5-3
	2	31	33.42	12.18			
	3	141	39.37	11.25			
	4	99	39.04	11.64			
	5	267	36.13	14.61			
To what extent do you consider yourself religious? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-religious at all and 5 indicates the	1	29	38.00	13.60	1.38	0.24	
	2	18	40.06	13.74			
	3	142	37.91	12.13			
	4	175	38.06	12.27			
	5	245	35.62	14.41			

Table 4 contains the ANOVA test results for the data collected from the participants. A significant difference was identified upon examining the responses to the question, “What is your approach toward political issues? Can you mark your place where 1 means the far left and 5 means the far right?” ($F=3.45$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis H2.1 was accepted. As a result of the LSD test conducted to determine the source of the difference, a significant difference was determined in favor of individuals regarding themselves in position 3 among those who regarded themselves in positions 3 and 5.

Considering the responses to the question “To what extent do you consider yourself nationalist? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-nationalists at all and 5 indicates the most nationalists?”, a significant difference was observed ($F=2.95$, $p<0.05$). Hence, hypothesis H3.1 was accepted. As a result of the LSD test carried out to determine the source of the difference, there was a significant difference in favor of the participants regarding themselves in position 3 among those who regarded themselves in positions 1 and 3, 2 and 3, and 3 and 5.

Finally, there was no significant difference upon examining the responses to the question “To what extent do you consider yourself religious? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-religious at all and 5 indicates the most religious?” ($F=1.38$, $p>0.05$). In this respect, hypothesis H4.1 was rejected.

These data reveal the complexity and diversity of attitudes towards Syrian refugees. The research demonstrates that these attitudes are influenced not only by individuals' personal characteristics but also by political, social, and cultural factors.

Firstly, the finding of a significant relationship between political orientation and attitudes towards Syrian refugees underscores the significant impact of politics and ideologies on refugee hostility. Specifically, individuals with centrist political views are found to exhibit more negative attitudes towards Syrian refugees.

The relationship between the level of nationalism and refugee hostility also provides an important insight. The research indicates that individuals identifying with moderate levels of nationalism hold more negative attitudes towards refugees compared to those at other levels of nationalism. This suggests that nationalist sentiment plays a significant role in shaping attitudes towards those perceived as outside of the group or nation.

However, there was no statistically significant relationship found between the level of religiosity and refugee hostility. This suggests that religiosity may have less influence on shaping attitudes towards refugees compared to other factors. Further investigation into the complex relationship between religiosity and attitudes towards refugees may be warranted.

In conclusion, these findings demonstrate that attitudes towards refugees are shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by broader contextual factors such as political climate, social structures, and cultural norms. Such research provides valuable insights for policymakers and relevant stakeholders in understanding and addressing negative attitudes towards refugees.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examining negative attitudes toward the Syrians under temporary protection revealed that the participants generally had negative attitudes toward the Syrians under temporary protection according to the data obtained from the participants. Saraçoğlu and Bélanger (2019) showed that public opinion toward the Syrians in Turkey became more negative recently. Based on the ethnographic fieldwork Saraçoğlu and Bélanger conducted at four research sites in Izmir, they demonstrated that the attitudes of the local Turkish population towards the Syrian refugee influx were based on prejudice and fear of losing their status.

According to the findings obtained in the study conducted by Doğan and Ünal (2021), foreign immigrants, which have been a permanent presence in Turkey for a long time now, are mostly perceived by the local population as disruptive and potentially more disruptive external groups. Güzel (2021) and Tayınmak and Furtuna (2022) found that participants had low attitudes toward the Syrians. It is thought that there has been serious disinformation about the Syrians in the local press, national press and social media platforms in Turkey, particularly in recent years, which affects the attitude. Additionally, it can be said that the increasing Syrian population and the recent inflationary period in Turkey have also affected this because there are opinions that this process is affected by the intense migration flow both in social media and in the populist discourses of some political parties. It is thought that this situation may affect the attitude toward immigration and asylum seekers.

A significant difference was observed between the participants who responded “yes” and “no” to the question, “Have you had a negative dialogue with any Syrian.” According to the results, the negative dialogue was effective in creating negative attitudes. Some studies show that negative contact between groups creates negative attitudes among group members (Alport, 1954; Barlow et al., 2012;

Techakesari et al., 2015). Moreover, some studies have demonstrated that positive contact also creates a positive attitude (Paolini et al., 2014; Hayward et al., 2017). Bağcı et al. (2020), who conducted research in the Turkish sample, concluded that positive contact was effective in creating a positive attitude. In the study conducted by Bağcı, Baysu, Tercan, and Turnuklu (2023), it has been shown that increasing positive contact buffers against the rise in outgroup negativity in behavioral tendencies. Çalışkan, Sarı and Yalçınkaya Alkar (2022) revealed that close social contact and intercultural sensitivity reduced intergroup anxiety and increased positive attitudes toward the Syrians. Acar (2021) found that negative attitudes toward the Syrians were above the country average in provinces close to the Syrian border. Furthermore, the negative attitudes of the participants who encounter the Syrians more frequently in their daily lives tend to decrease. In this respect, the relevant literature indicates a relationship between contact and attitude. As seen in the present study, negative contact is effective in creating negative attitudes.

A significant difference was found upon examining the responses to the question, “What is your approach toward political issues? Can you mark your place where 1 means the far left and 5 means the far right?”. As a result of the LSD test carried out to determine the source of the difference, there was a significant difference in favor of the participants regarding themselves in position 3 between those who regarded themselves in positions 3 and 5.

Some studies indicate that individuals who position themselves on the right will have a more negative attitude toward refugees than others, based on the idea that far-right parties in Europe turn refugee problems and the problems created by refugees into a propaganda tool in order to acquire an advantage against their rivals and this propaganda can also spread to their voters (Wilkes, Guppy & Farris, 2007; De Vries et al., 2013; Anderson & Ferguson, 2018; Van Der Brug & Harteveld, 2021). However, it is seen that this situation does not have similar features in the sample of Turkey as in the European Union countries, which can be attributed to numerous reasons. Some researchers state that political parties and the media play an important role in shaping the image of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and other perceived “out” groups (Crisp, 2005; Grove & Zwi, 2006). Hence, the political structure of Turkey is one of the issues considered important in this respect. The AK Party, which has been the influential actor in the entry of refugees into Turkey, is currently in power. Although the AK Party is not a party with an extreme right character, its ruling partner, the MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), is a right-wing nationalist party. Therefore, both parties do not make refugees a propaganda tool as in European countries (See the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Election Declaration, See the AK Parti 2023 Political Vision). In light of these data, it is thought that the negative attitude of individuals who position themselves on the far right toward the Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey, as in European countries, is not determinative compared to other participants. On the contrary, individuals who position themselves in the middle have more negative attitudes than those who position themselves on the extreme right since the participants who position themselves in the middle are not under the

influence of a restrictive authority in creating negative attitudes compared to those who position themselves on the extreme right, which can explain this situation. It is thought that this may originate from the relatively non-discriminatory discourse of political party leaders, who, as claimed, position themselves on the far right and keep large masses under their control.

When the responses to the question “To what extent do you consider yourself nationalist? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-nationalists at all and 5 indicates the most nationalists?” were examined, a significant difference was revealed. As a result of the LSD test conducted to determine the source of the difference, a significant difference was determined in favor of the participants who regarded themselves in position 3 between those who regarded themselves in positions 1 and 3, 2 and 3, and 3 and 5. Numerous studies in the recent literature show that there are concerns that possible contact with immigrants will harm many cultural and material values of the local people and negative attitudes are formed in this respect (McLaren & Johnson, 2007; Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015a). Van der Brug and Harteveld (2021) found the conditional effects of nationalistic feelings due to the increasing number of asylum applications. Jeong (2013) revealed that 'nationalism, national identity, and national pride' had different impacts on attitudes toward immigrants.

In the present study, different results from the general literature were found in the nationalism variable, as well as in the approach toward political issues. It is observed that individuals who position themselves in the middle have a more negative attitude than non-nationalists and ultra-nationalists. The fact that this situation is similar to the variable of political positioning encourages us to make a similar claim.

No significant difference was revealed upon examining the responses to the question, “To what extent do you consider yourself religious? Can you mark your place where 1 indicates non-religious at all and 5 indicates the most religious?”. There are numerous opinions in the literature that the level of religiosity can create negative attitudes and prejudices. Considering these views, there is no common opinion on whether religion causes negative attitudes or prejudices (Altemeyer, 2003, p. 17-28). Adorno et al. (1950) determined that individuals with high levels of religiosity also had high levels of prejudice. According to Allport and Ross (1967), religious people are prejudiced. On average, churchgoers are more prejudiced than those who are not. Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) argued that religious fundamentalism could act with prejudice. Batson et al. (1993) identified a positive relationship between church attendance or other measures of religiosity and racial prejudice. According to Scheepers et al. (2002), the more religiosity is evident in people's lives and the more spirituality they experience, the more they move away from prejudices. Nevertheless, people's prejudice increases as they accept religious particularism stronger. Brandt and Reyna (2010) stated that they partially agreed with the view that religious fundamentalism was consistently associated with prejudices against various outgroups. Ben-Nun Bloom et al. (2015a) expressed that religious social identity increased opposition to immigrants who did not resemble ingroup members regarding religion or ethnicity, whereas religious

belief generated warm attitudes toward immigrants of the same religion and ethnicity, particularly among less conservative religious people. Billiet (1995) revealed that church involvement had a moderating effect on ethnic prejudice. According to Schwartz and Huismans (1995), religions encourage people to seek meaning beyond everyday life and exhibit attitudes of awe, respect, and humility. Bohman and Hjerm (2014) observed that religious people were, on average, less likely to oppose immigration than non-religious people. In their study conducted in Turkey, Sağır and Paloutzian (2020) demonstrated that prejudice decreased as religious attitudes became more positive. The study conducted by Tepe et al. (2019) in the Turkish sample demonstrated that extrinsic-personal religious orientation was a significant determinant in increasing the negative attitude toward Syrian refugees, while internal religious orientation was an important determinant in reducing negative attitudes. In the current research, it was observed that the level of religiosity was not effective in creating negative attitudes. It is thought that this situation may be caused by reasons such as the fact that the local people and the Syrians who arrived in Turkey as guests belong to the same religion, they were part of the same country until the beginning of the 1900s, and they are still strong partial kinship ties between the two countries.

For the study, ethics committee permission document dated October 21, 2022 and numbered 10 was obtained from the İstanbul Kent University Ethics Committee.

The study has been crafted in adherence to the principles of research and publication ethics.

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The entire work was carried out by its only, stated author.

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