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PANDEMIC CONTENTS RELATED TO REFUGEES IN TURKEY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ONLINE WEBSITES OF THE THREE MOST CIRCULATING NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

Affecting all continents and being a threat to the world population, the Covid-19 pandemic poses a risk especially for vulnerable groups such as refugees, exiles, stateless people, and those suffering from conflicts and oppression in their countries. This study mainly aims to determine how refugee-specific contents are presented in online newspapers during the pandemic. In the study, 200 contents accessed via the internet archives of three newspapers with the highest circulation in Turkey (Sözcü, Hürriyet, and Sabah) as of August 2020 were analyzed by using the content analysis technique. The study concluded that the contents reflect the unfair treatment of refugees; nevertheless, these refugees are also believed to pose a threat with regards to Covid-19 disease. Besides, the Greek government's approach towards refugees was criticized and the lack of EU support for Turkey regarding the refugees was frequently voiced in the contents. It can also be said that politicians ask for help and expect sensitivity from EU countries because of the growing concerns about refugees' spreading the disease to the public rather than the spread of the disease among the refugees. The problems of refugees in their inner worlds have never been voiced, not elaborated, or somehow dealt with superficially.

Keywords: *Refugees, Quarantine, Immigration, Covid-19, Immigrant*

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ MÜLTECİLERE İLİŞKİN PANDEMİ İÇERİKLERİ: TİRAJİ EN YÜKSEK ÜÇ GAZETENİN HABER SİTELERİNE YÖNELİK BİR İÇERİK ANALİZİ

Öz

Tüm kıtaları etkileyen ve tüm dünya nüfusunu riske atan Covid-19 salgını, özellikle mülteciler, ülke içinde yerinden edilmiş kişiler, vatansız kişiler, çatışma ve zulümden etkilenen diğer insanlar gibi en savunmasız grupları riske atmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı pandemi sürecinde mültecilere ilişkin içeriklerin online gazetelere nasıl yansıdığını ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada 2020 yılı ağustos ayı itibarıyla en yüksek tiraja sahip üç gazetenin (Sözcü, Hürriyet ve Sabah) internet arşivinde konuyla birebir ilgili 200 içerik, içerik analizi tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda içeriklerde mültecilerin mağduriyetinin kabul edildiği ancak yine de Covid-19 hastalığı konusunda bir tehdit unsuru olarak görüldükleri ortaya çıkmaktadır. Özellikle Yunanistan'ın mültecilere ilişkin yaklaşımları eleştirilirken, AB'nin Türkiye'yi mülteciler konusunda yalnız bıraktığı da sıklıkla dile getirilmektedir. Mülteciler arasında hastalığın yayılmasından çok yerleştikleri bölgelerdeki halka salgını taşıyabilecekleri endişesi mültecilerle ilgili bir panik oluşturmuştur. Dolayısıyla bu korkuyu gören politikacıların AB ülkelerinden yardım ve duyarlılık beklediği söylenebilir. Mültecilerin iç dünyalarında yaşadıkları sorunlar ise neredeyse hiç dile getirilmemiş, detaylandırılmamış, yüzeysel olarak işlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Mülteciler, Karantina, Göç, Covid-19, Göçmen*

Introduction

On December 31st, 2019, World Health Organization China Office reported several cases of pneumonia with unknown causes in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. Later,

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** Yazar / yazarlar, makalede araştırma ve yayın etiğine uyulduğuna ve kullanılan fikir ve sanat eserleri için telif hakları düzenlemelerine riayet edildiğine yönelik beyanda bulunmuştur.

on January 5th, 2020, a new type of coronavirus was defined by the medical authorities. Called 2019-nCoV initially, the virus was later named “Covid-19”. It quickly spread worldwide three months after it was first identified in China, and WHO declared the situation a “pandemic” on March 12th, 2020. This pandemic now poses a serious physical, mental, and social threat to the world. Turkey confirmed the first case of Covid-19 in the country on March 12th, 2020 (Budak and Korkmaz, 2020).

On March 29th, 2020, WHO published a report to inform the world about the number of Covid-19 infected people and the death toll in the countries as well as several possible precautions to take during the pandemic. The pandemic spread very quickly by increasing the number of Covid-19 infected people to 23.700.000, and the death toll increased to 820.000 in the world as of August 26th, 2020 (worldometers.info, 2020). This rapidly spreading pandemic has affected the world in different ways, and many precautions have been taken at micro and macro levels so far.

People who feel obliged to leave their countries due to wars, conflicts, and political crises are at serious risks. They also face many problems and are neglected the most during such pandemics. Moreover, financial problems and health risks due to living and working in crowded environments as well as language problems make the situation even worse. Finally, restricted access to housing, food, and sanitation, and various facilities, especially health facilities, are among the reasons that make such people considerably vulnerable (The Report of the Association with Asylum-seekers and Refugees, 2020).

Affecting all continents and being a threat to the world population, the Covid-19 pandemic poses a risk for vulnerable groups such as refugees, exiles, stateless people, and those suffering from conflicts and oppression in their countries (Almathami, 2020). This study examines the lives of refugees during the pandemic, when life is relatively more challenging, by analyzing the data obtained from the contents of online newspapers.

1. The Refugee Problem: The Reflections of the World and Turkey

Under this heading is primarily the refugee issue and the situation of refugees in the world and Turkey were discussed. Then the researcher assessed the literature which is about the pandemic and refugee problems in the world and Turkey in particular.

1.1. The Refugee Problem

Article 1 of the Geneva Convention defines a refugee as a person who resides in countries outside of his country of nationality, who is unable to return to his country, or does not want to return because of fear (Geneva Convention, 1951).

In simple terms, a refugee is a person who has to leave their country due to serious threats to their lives (Peker and Sancar, 1986, p. 8). The term asylum seeker is different from the definition of a refugee. That is to say, a person who has the necessary criteria to become a refugee, but has not yet been granted refugee status by the official authority, is an asylum seeker (Immigration Terms Dictionary, 2009, p. 49). The concept of immigrant is different from the definition of refugee and asylum seeker. An immigrant is a person who voluntarily leaves his country to obtain better living conditions due to economic reasons. Immigrants can benefit from the protection of their own countries (Başak, 2011, p. 21).

The number of refugees has started to increase worldwide due to genocides, human rights violations, and the increase in war crimes in the last period of the 20th century. Since 2010, the Ivory Coast in Africa, the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Burundi, Iraq in the Middle East, Syria, Yemen,

Ukraine in Europe, Myanmar in Asia, Kyrgyzstan People affected by ethnic, religious, cultural and economic conflicts in fifteen different regions of the world, including Pakistan and Pakistan, left their lands and took refuge in neighboring states to ensure their safety (UNHRC, Global Trends Report, 2017, p. 1).

According to the "Global Tendencies Report" published by the United Nations Migration Organization before "World Day of Refugees" on June 20th, the number of refugees in the world was 79.500.000 as of the end of 2019. Refugees are commonly defined as "people who are forced to leave their countries due to wars and poverty".

Asia, Europe, and Africa with a transition path between Turkey, many since the 1980s has become an important center for foreigners. Political instability and conflict in Turkey's neighbors are also vulnerable to a shelter to escape the country's frontiers. Most of these people are immigrants of Asian or African origin (İçduygu et al., 2014, p. 236).

With the Foreigners and International Protection Act (YUKK) (dated 2013; Number 6458), Turkey has managed to collect its legislation on immigration and asylum under one roof. Then Turkey has established the Immigration Administration General Directorate Thus, a significant gap with the basic laws of YUKK on Turkey's immigration and asylum has been fixed (Savar and Kedikli, 2019, p. 1120).

Therefore, the number of refugees and asylum seekers in the world has increased considerably in the last ten years. The biggest factor in this increase is the high number of Syrian refugees due to the civil war in Syria. Internal turmoil in Syria started as a protest against the Assad government in the spring of 2011 and then became more complicated. During this period, approximately 7.6 million Syrians were displaced. More than 4 million Syrians have become asylum seekers in other countries (İçduygu, 2015, p. 2). Today, Turkey hosts 3.900.000 refugees, 92% of whom are Syrians. 1.6 millions of these 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey are children (Öztürk, 2020). Unfortunately, the lives of refugees in the world are getting more and more difficult.

1.1.Changes in the Migration Patterns During the Pandemic

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the refugees at the Greek borders had succeeded in setting the agenda with their struggles to enter the country. The refugees who were inflicted with violence by the police and even by other civilians at the Greek border had suddenly become a part of the agenda as of the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of these refugees tried to return to their homeland through their means while others were taken to certain cities in Turkey such as Çanakkale and İzmir by the Turkish Immigration Office after they were kept in quarantine conditions for 14 days. The refugees who tried to cross the Greek border were treated badly to prevent them from entering the country. Unfortunately, those who managed to return to Turkey had more difficult lives in the refugee camps due to the pandemic (Koç, 2020).

United Nations General Assembly affirmed *Global Compact on Refugees* on December 17th, 2018 by adopting the resolution numbered 73/151 (unhrc.org.tr, 2020). This text is based on the principle that all expenses and responsibilities due to the refugee crisis should be fairly and equally shared among countries. Although the pandemic has provided an ideal situation to test the above-mentioned compact and required international cooperation, there are still serious doubts about to what extent this compact has been taken into account in practice. Besides, the compact also reflects the political will of the international community towards the encouragement of cooperation and solidarity among refugees and host countries. Although it is a non-binding compact, it is expected to be a basic and unique instrument to ensure international collaboration to protect refugees and

assist them. Therefore, it fills a legal gap with its related regulations and responsibilities. It is also believed to provide an invaluable opportunity to change how the world reacts to the refugee problem by taking into consideration the benefits of both refugees and hosting communities.

Law on Foreigners and International Protection enacted on April 11th, 2013 regulates the health rights of refugees and unregistered immigrants in Turkey as well as their access to health services (Official Gazette of Republic of Turkey, 2013). According to the law, refugees can access health services free of charge as part of social insurance. However, they can access only the health services located in the cities determined by the Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management. These cities are called "satellite cities" (Official Gazette of Republic of Turkey, 2014; Official Gazette of Republic of Turkey, 2015). The law numbered 30988 and enacted on December 24th, 2019 terminated general health insurances of individuals who applied for protection status and lived in Turkey for more than one year and were over 18 years old. Therefore, as of January 1st, 2020, the people in this category - except those who can officially prove that they cannot afford to pay for general health insurance premiums - must pay for their premiums by themselves, (Official Gazette of Republic of Turkey, 2019; Ministry of Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management, 2020).

There were also some refugee-related problems at Turkish borders during the pandemic. Since Turkey announced that it would allow refugees to cross the Greek border, many refugees from different cities of Turkey swarmed into the Edirne-Greece border in late February 2020. Some of these refugees returned to their cities while others were placed in temporary refugee centers since the border was closed due to the pandemic. The 14-day quarantine period of 5800 refugees in the temporary refugee centers in 9 different cities ended in mid-April and they were sent to different cities by buses. However, some of them tried to continue to stay in the open areas around İzmir bus terminal through their means. At the end of April, NGOs and local governments funded their transfer to the cities they officially resided in (Tanış, 2020; sendika.org, 2020).

All these developments mentioned above clearly show that the refugees were affected by the legal limitations as well as immigration and health policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Obligation to cope with language and social adaptation problems and prejudiced reactions from people have negatively affected their physical and mental health.

2. Some Studies on Covid-19 and Disadvantaged Groups

Under this sub-title firstly the Turkish studies, then the international studies are summarized.

2.1. Turkish studies

Turkish studies mainly focus on the difficult living conditions of refugees, language problems, and information pollution.

Researchers have recently started to discuss the refugee-related dimension of the issue in their studies. To illustrate, Koç (2020) analyzed online newspapers to determine the problems that refugees encounter in the world, in Turkey, and at the borders. He concluded that they are the weakest link of the existing world order and elaborated the issues in terms of poverty and discrimination dimensions.

More studies are focusing on Covid-19 according to different dimensions than on refugees. For instance, Budak and Korkmaz (2020) examined the Covid-19 pandemic in general and suggested solutions and implications for the pandemic by focusing on its

effects both in the world and Turkey. Kırık and Özkoçak (2020) dealt with the relationship between Covid-19 and new media. The use of new media to inform people about the developments regarding Covid-19 and the spread of all kinds of information – no matter it is accurate or wrong- were discussed within the framework of media anthropology. Focusing on disinformation, Aydın (2020) claimed that we are experiencing a post-truth period where true information is manipulated, and the truth is depreciated. He also emphasized that the disinformation problem has been alarmingly serious during the Covid-19 (new coronavirus) pandemic and internet users have been misled by the fake social media accounts created by using the name of Ministry of Health and Coronavirus Scientific Committee, a committee established as a unit in the ministry to fight against the disease. The study also analyzed the data obtained from the examination of social media contents by the "*teyit.org*" verification platform during the pandemic. The results of the study showed that almost all the news published in various media for one week as of March 11th, 2020, when the first coronavirus case was confirmed in Turkey, was incorrect.

Dedeler et.al (2020) reported that the pandemic also affected Africa and there is a growing concern that the pandemic will spread to masses and increase the death toll in a short time in the continent, where access to Covid-19 treatment and drinkable water is limited and the number of hospital beds, laboratory capacity and infrastructure are not sufficient. Besides, the high prevalence of certain diseases in the continent such as malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis might contribute to the increase of the mortality rate. Dealing with the international effects of the pandemic, Özalp (2020, p. 127) pointed out that the pandemics affecting the world throughout the 20th century and in the early 21st century increased the responsibilities of countries at both national and international level in terms of economy, security, and diplomacy. He also stated that national security should be redefined due to the pandemics which has had global effects in the 21st century and these extraordinary conditions extend the rights and power domain of governments while narrowing down the borders of individual freedom.

Mardin et.al (2020), in their study, reported the following findings: refugees are not provided sufficient information about Covid-19; they do not know which hospital(s) they should apply to if they think they are infected with the virus; unregistered immigrants face language problems during registration and contact tracing procedures; and refugees lose their jobs during the pandemic, which, in turn, affects their access to housing, food and health services. Therefore, it is essential to act by addressing all refugees in Turkey concerning social and economic issues through collaborations with local non-governmental organizations as well as international organizations.

2.2. International literature

The international literature reveals that the Covid-19 pandemic has been studied by many researchers in 2020 although it is a quite recent topic. While most of these studies have been conducted in the field of medicine, the human psychology and sociology dimension of the issue have often been discussed in social sciences studies.

The studies available in the international literature focusing on Covid-19 generally deal with the psychological and sociological effects of the pandemic. For instance, Roychowdhury (2020) studied "disease", "crisis" and "isolation" issues and reported that the pandemic has not only affected health systems, economies, and governments but also it has evolved into a global health crisis and become a threat to the lives of millions worldwide. The researcher also suggested that Covid-19 should be discussed as a psychological crisis although it is a pandemic, which is considered a biomedical problem. He also claimed that the pandemic is likely to deteriorate the already existing vulnerability

of the disadvantaged groups. It might also result in an increase in domestic violence and the number of homeless people, refugees, and people suffering from extreme poverty, as well as isolation of marginal groups and alienation, discrimination, and unfair treatment of these people due to strict precautions taken to prevent the pandemic. Similarly, Otekunrin et.al (2020), in their study, showed that African countries are struggling against starvation and tried to determine the effects of Covid-19 on this starvation problem in Africa. Emphasizing that starvation problems have become worse due to the pandemic, the study suggests that African countries should prioritize sustainable agriculture practices and give special importance to the formalization and implementation of minimizing the starvation caused by the financial problems due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Almahatmi (2020), who has made one of the fiercest criticisms about the refugee problem, recommended that deporting refugees to their homeland should be suspended temporarily during the Covid-19 pandemic because the countries they are deported to might have poor health systems. The researcher also suggested that governments should fulfill their responsibilities as described in Global Compact on Refugees and provide long-term financial support for host countries. According to the researcher, Global Finance Organizations (The World Bank and IMF) or local organizations (African Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank) should play leading roles in funding and providing other means of financing for poor host countries and help them cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, the researcher stated that refugees are blamed during the pandemic and criticized Global Compact as a useless attempt by stating that a non-binding regulation is not likely to aim to adopt a policy to share the expenses and responsibilities at the global level.

Similarly, Branderberger et.al (2020) found that the number of refugees and asylum seekers who managed to reach Mediterranean countries in the first two months of 2020 was over 15.000. Moreover, they highlighted that refugee camps fail to provide necessary conditions to protect people from Covid-19 disease. The researchers also tried to attract people's attention through the photographs of a Swiss activist, who published a series of photographs to raise awareness about the difficulties of implementing precautions to prevent Covid-19 disease in refugee camps. These photographs depict the following banners: "can't stay home if you got none", "can't call a doctor if there is no doctor", "can't wash hands if there is one water tap for 1300 people and no soap" and "can't avoid crowds if you live in a camp" (Figure 1). Besides, the apathy of western countries for this crisis is emphasized within the framework of possible solutions to the problem.

Figure 1. The Swiss Activist and Her Messages



Kaynak: Brandenberger et al. 2020

Shrivastava and Shrivastava (2020) pointed out that immigrants and refugees are the most vulnerable groups during pandemic conditions. Therefore, these groups should be immediately taken into consideration in the action plans to control the spread of the virus and they should be given the right to be physically and mentally healthy. In conclusion, they suggested that we need to adopt a “whole society” approach, which mainly includes refugees and immigrants and is based on collaborations with various sectors to overcome the Covid-19 threat. Therefore, it is essential to extend all prevention and control activities to vulnerable groups and minimize the risk of infection.

Similarly, Ardittis and Laczko (2020) denoted that Covid-19 has had enormous effects on immigrants and migration policies worldwide. According to the report published by IOM, 215 countries are taking a total of 52.262 precautions as of April 23rd, 2020. Thus, the researchers voiced their concerns about the possible risks, especially for immigrants and refugees. Most refugees live in common areas and have the risk of infection and they report that they face problems due to restrictions imposed by the governments. Many countries have closed their borders and refugees could not see their children and families for some time and there was a growing risk of long-lasting family separations for longer times.

The situation is even worse in Lebanon and Jordan, where many refugees live. Diad and Nabulski (2020) reported that the Middle East and North Africa have been flooded by refugees in the last ten years and Lebanon and Jordan are hosting the highest number of refugees per capita in the world. There are 657.000 registered refugees in Jordan and 1.700.000 in Lebanon, 1.500.000 of whom are from Syria. The number is thought to be much higher due to unregistered refugees. The researchers stated that most of these refugees live in crowded camps under very bad health and hygiene conditions due to a shortage of water and it is quite difficult to access water and sanitation as well as to practice quarantine conditions in these places. Finally, they highlighted that unemployment also increased due to the pandemic, which made the refugees more vulnerable.

Robertson, Bondareva, and Aspden (2020) conducted a case study with the refugees in England and aimed to identify their problems through interviews. They identified language problems and discrimination as the main problems and suggested that the interpreter problem should be solved immediately.

In short, it might be concluded that both national and international literature emphasizes the difficult living conditions of refugees. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, refugees, who face various problems both in Turkey and the world, now must live under worse living conditions. They suffer from psychological problems due to discrimination in addition to other problems such as the difficulty of implementing quarantine conditions, higher unemployment rates due to the pandemic, not having a work permit, crowded camps, bad sanitation, and shortage of water. Moreover, the violence inflicted on illegal immigrants in host countries, especially in Greece, has been emphasized by many researchers. It is believed that examining online newspaper contents about refugees during the Covid-19 pandemic will contribute to the literature by elaborating the problem.

3. Methodology

This study mainly aims to determine how refugee-specific contents are presented in online newspapers during the pandemic.

The main problem of the study is to describe with which themes the media make their voices heard and how they express them, based on the presumption that the already difficult living conditions of refugees are getting more and more difficult with the

pandemic. The main themes and sub-themes in the content related to refugees, problems related to refugees, determination of the general perspective of the media regarding refugees will provide data in terms of providing a better understanding of their living conditions and psychology during the pandemic period and determining the policies in this regard.

The universe of the study is all the contents regarding refugees and pandemics in the three most circulated newspapers. The sample is all content between February 2020 and 23 August 2020, available in these 3 newspapers. The reason for choosing these dates is that the oldest accessible content related to the theme in question is from February. As the analysis was completed on August 23, 2020, all content was evaluated until the analysis was completed. It can be said that almost the entire universe has been accessed since the number of contents in question is limited. The basic assumption of the research is that the daily lives of refugees have become increasingly difficult with the pandemic and this has become an international problem. Therefore, it tries to find answers to the following questions to achieve this main purpose:

1. What is the main theme?
2. What are sub-themes?
3. What problems of refugees are voiced?
4. What are positive and negative opinions about the adaptation of refugees?
5. What is the attitude towards refugees in the contents? (Positive, Negative, Neutral)
6. What is the image of female refugees? (Strong, weak, aggrieved, contended, etc.)
7. What is the image of male refugees?
8. What is the image of child refugees?
9. Who is foregrounded in the visuals?

Within the scope of the study, the following keywords were used to search the internet archives of three newspapers with the highest circulation in Turkey (Sözcü, Hürriyet, and Sabah) as of August 2020: "Mülteci corona" (refugee corona), "pandemi mülteci" (pandemic refugee), "mülteci covid" (refugee corona) "Suriye covid mülteci" (Syria Covid refugee), "pandemi Suriyeli" (pandemic Syrian), "Suriyeli covid" (Syrian Covid), "Suriye corona" (Syria corona), "Suriyeliler corona" (Syrians corona), "mülteciler pandemic" (refugees pandemic), "sığınmacılar pandemic" (asylum seekers pandemic), "sığınmacılar salgın" (asylum seekers pandemic) and "göçmen salgın" (immigrant pandemic). 200 contents out of 284 accessed ones were analyzed since they were directly related to both refugees and the pandemic. Other 84 contents were about either refugees or the pandemic alone, so they were not included in the analysis. These contents were accessed in 7 months between February and August 2020, and they were googled until August 23rd, 2020. The content analysis included 16 themes and 155 sub-themes, and two different coders coded these themes and sub-themes.

The researcher used many keywords so that she could reach more content related to refugees and the pandemic. Therefore, during the month when the pandemic started and during the month of August when the researcher prepared the study, it seems unlikely that the content published in these online newspapers was skipped over and over again with different keywords. After a while, it is possible to reach the same content continuously. For

this reason, the number of contents examined had to be limited to 200. The months in question have not been selected purposefully. However, these months were found worth analyzing as they were the months when the first pandemic contents regarding refugees started to be published. Since the oldest content on refugees in these 3 newspapers is from February and the research was completed in August, the research is limited to these months.

The reason for choosing the contents of the three newspapers with the highest circulation in terms of content is that these newspapers can find readers in online media as well as reach many people in print, so their power to set the agenda is high. The reason for not examining the printed version is that there is limited accessibility, especially in the Covid-19 period, and it is more possible for the researcher to access the online archive.

Krippendorff (2004, p. 18), who considerably contributed to the terminology of the content analysis method used in the analysis of communication, art, and literature studies, defines content analysis as "a research technique aiming to make reliable and valid implications from written texts or other types of discourse". Before the categorization, an interview was conducted with the coders to discuss which main theme will be used to code about the related literature (Shrivastava and Shrivastava, 2020; Tanış, 2020; Brandenberger et al. 2020). In the first phase, 20 contents were coded by the coders and the consistency between the coders was calculated in percentages. Later, the codes on which the coders could not agree were reevaluated. Later, the inter-rater consistency was recalculated for 50 contents. The percentage of inter-coder consistency was 82.27%.

The formula used to calculate inter-rater consistency is as follows (Miles and Huberman, 1994):

Total number of codes by the 1st coder + Total number of codes by the 2nd coder / the number of agreed codes

While determining the main categories, the theme that a particular content focuses on was taken as "the main theme" and all the other themes as "sub-theme". The issue presented in the content as a problem was categorized as "the main problem". The contents reflecting the adaptation or lack of adaptation of refugees were coded as "adapted" or "not adapted" while the contents that do not imply anything about this adaptation were coded as "neutral". The "refugee image" category refers to the image reflected in the contents.

As for the codes which were coded differently by the coders (% 17.73), it is seen that these differences were due to different perceptions about the main theme and sub-themes. Besides, the contents in which "the main problem" was perceived differently by the coders affected this high percentage.

4. Findings

This section presents the findings of the study under the following titles:

4.1. Newspapers, Content Types, and the Months of Publication

The contents about refugees during the pandemic were classified according to the newspapers, content types, and the months of publication.

Table 1. The Contents according to the Month of Publication

Newspapers	Month of publication							Frekans	Yüzde
	February	March	April	May	June	July	August		
Sözcü	5	21	26	4	12	6	4	78	39
Hürriyet	2	21	11	11	13	10	1	70	35
Sabah	1	18	10	10	4	8	2	52	26
Total	8	60	47	25	29	24	7	200	100

According to Table 1, the contents were predominantly published in March, when the pandemic started to spread intensively (60). The reason for this might be that people got panicked in March the most, which is followed by April (47), June (29) and May (25). February, when the virus was relatively less popular on the agenda, and August, when the pandemic was gradually out of the agenda, are two months with the fewest number of contents. Finally, it was found that the number of contents started to decrease as of March and gradually went out of the agenda as of July.

Since March is the most intense agenda regarding the virus, schools are closed, and the quarantine process begins, it can be said that refugees are more subject to the content in this period. Since March and April are the months when the border gates opened and closed to refugees are the most on the agenda, it can be said that the content related to refugees and pandemics is mostly concentrated in these months.

Table 2. Content-Type

Newspaper	Total			Frekans	Yüzde
	News	Column	Interview		
Sözcü	70	6	39	78	39
Hürriyet	60	9	35	70	35
Sabah	49	3	26	52	26
Total	179	18	100	200	100

Table 2 shows that the contents are predominantly "news" (179). The news contents were mostly published in Sözcü newspaper (70), which was followed by Hürriyet newspaper (60). The issue was discussed in "columns" as the second most common content type (18). This finding might imply that the issue does not seem to be interesting enough to discuss in columns and provide solutions accordingly.

4.2. The News Sources

Table 3. News Sources

News sources	Newspapers			Frekans	Yüzde
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah		
Foreign newspapers /authorities	26	14	27	67	33,5
Politicians /mayors	24	23	4	51	25,5
Columnists / journalists	9	8	3	20	10
Immigrants / ordinary citizens	3	12	4	19	9,5
Not stated	6	2	5	13	6,5
Association /foundation authorities	3	3	4	10	5
Other	7	8	5	20	10
Total	78	70	52	200	100

According to Table 3, the news sources in the contents are predominantly "foreign sources" (67), which is followed by "politicians/mayors (51), columnists/journalists (20) and immigrants /ordinary citizens (19). The contents predominantly include commentaries by foreign newspapers, authorities of foreign governments, or associations, which imply that the issue is of international importance. It can be said that columnists and journalists also commented on the issue in their columns and news. Immigrants were news sources

only in 9,5 % of the contents, which shows that the problems of immigrants were voiced by authorities of high-level institutions rather than immigrants themselves. The news sources identified in the study clearly show that the immigration problem during the pandemic is an international problem.

Some of the codes in the “other” category are as follows: Ministry of Health/directorates (5), singer/actor/football player/sociologist (5), terrorism expert/academician (4).

Table 4. Newspaper Sections

Section	Newspapers			Frekans	Yüzde
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah		
Agenda	41	35	13	89	44,5
World	24	11	21	56	28
Columns	7	9	4	20	10
Local news	0	2	7	9	4,5
Other	6	13	7	26	13
Total	78	70	52	200	100

Table 4 shows that the contents were predominantly published on the "agenda" section of the online newspapers (89), which is followed by the "world" (56) and “columns” section (20). The reason for the predominance of the contents in the "agenda" and "world" sections is that the theme is discussed in illegal immigrants’ agenda contents or the contents related to other countries. Although the issue is closely followed in the Turkish agenda, it is a common issue for both Turkish and the world agenda. The third common section for the issue is "columns", which shows the interest of columnists in the issue.

In this case, the problem of refugees related to Covid 19 has much more space in the news agenda but not enough in the corner posts.

Some of the codes in the “other” category are as follows: “Europe” (6), “health” (5), “economy” (3), “life” (3).

4.3. The Main and Sub-Themes in the Contents

Table 5. Main Theme

Main theme	Newspapers			Frekans	Yüzde
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah		
Refugees as a threat to society	34	24	14	72	36
Unfair treatment of refugees	10	19	16	45	22,5
Lack of EU support for Turkey	4	16	6	26	13
Covid-19 positive refugees’ entering Europe	8	0	3	11	5,5
Call for sensitivity to European countries about refugees	4	6	1	11	5,5
The claim that the news about the refugees are manipulated	5	0	0	5	2,5
Other	13	4	8	25	12,5
Total	78	70	52	200	100

According to Table 5, the most common theme of the contents is “refugees as a threat for society” (72), which is followed by “unfair treatment of refugees” (45). Other common main themes are “lack of EU support for Turkey” (26), “Covid-19 positive refugees’ entering Greece/Europe” (11), and "call for sensitivity to European countries about refugees” (11).

The main theme of the contents is “refugees as a threat for society", which can be associated with the opinion that the spread of Covid-19 among the refugees can be a threat

to the public. The second common theme is “unfair treatment of refugees”. Another important theme is “lack of EU support for Turkey about the refugees” because the EU did not keep its promise to help Turkey with the refugees. Besides, “call for sensitivity to European countries about refugees” were often voiced; especially by politicians/mayors. Finally, the migration to Greece was presented in many contents.

Some of the codes in the “other” category are as follows: “the necessity to stop refugee rush” (4), “the changes in refugee policy before Covid-19; opening European borders” (4), “The Turkish residents who cannot return homeland due to Coronavirus” (3), “Syrians’ returning to their homeland” (3), “death of illegal refugees from Coronavirus” (3), “Greek Police’s forcibly sending the asylum-seekers to Turkey” (2).

Table 6. Sub-themes

Sub-theme	Newspapers			Frekans	Yüzde
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah		
Difficult living conditions of the refugees	39	45	38	122	
Countries’ attempts to get rid of sick refugees	34	28	12	74	
EU countries’ reluctance to host refugees	22	26	12	60	
The necessity to provide Covid-19 support for refugees	20	20	16	56	
The necessity to quarantine refugees	29	11	8	48	
Refugees’ continuing attempts to enter Greece and the violence they are exposed to	14	9	10	33	
The necessity to prevent refugees from entering/leaving the countries	12	6	5	23	
Strict precautions at the borders	2	14	4	20	
The high number of unregistered refugees	10	4	1	15	
Edirne’s getting peaceful again when the refugees were sent to Greek borders	7	4	2	13	
Other	5	5	10	20	
Total	194	172	118	484	

Table 6 shows that the predominant sub-theme of the contents is “difficult living conditions of refugees” (122), which is followed by “countries’ attempts to get rid of sick refugees” (74) and “EU countries’ reluctance to host refugees” (60). Other common sub-themes are as follows: “the necessity to provide Covid-19 support for refugees”, “the necessity to quarantine refugees”, “refugees’ continuing attempts to enter Greece and the violence they are exposed to”, “the necessity to prevent refugees from entering/leaving the countries”, “strict precautions at the borders”, “the high number of unregistered refugees.”

The sub-themes in the contents are consistent with the main themes. “Difficult living conditions of refugees” is a sub-theme of the contents. Other sub-themes, which are “countries’ attempts to get rid of sick refugees” and “EU countries’ reluctance to host refugees”, support the perception that refugees are isolated from the world”. Similarly, another sub-theme “the necessity to provide Covid -19 support for refugees” is also common just like “the necessity to quarantine refugees”, “refugees’ continuing attempts to enter Greece and the violence they are exposed to”, “strict precautions at the borders” and “high number of unregistered refugees”.

Some of the codes in the “other” category are as follows: “Discrimination of Syrians” (blaming them for spreading the virus) (6), “fear of refugees to be deported due to Coronavirus” (3), “refugees undermine tourism /the loss in the tourism will be compensated in a different way” (3).

4.4. The Main Problem and The Adaptation of The Refugees

Table 7. The Main Problem

Problem	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Refugees need help	16	30	17	63
Refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece	20	22	13	55
The spread of the Coronavirus from the refugees to the public	24	15	15	54
The rapid spread of Coronavirus among the refugees	11	2	2	15
The claim that the information about the refugees during the pandemic is not disclosed	6	0	0	6
Other	1	1	5	7
Total	78	70	52	200

Table 7 shows that the most common problem mentioned in the contents is “refugees need help” (63) which is followed by “refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece” (55) and “the spread of Coronavirus from the refugees to the public” (54). The other problems mentioned are “the rapid spread of Coronavirus among the refugees” and “the claim that the information about the refugees during the pandemic is not disclosed.”

The main problem stated in the contents is "refugees need help", which is mostly voiced by "politicians/mayors". Although these attempts may imply that there is sensitivity towards the issue, the stated problems “refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece” and “the spread of Coronavirus from the refugees to the public” support the belief that refugees are perceived as a threat. Besides, "politicians/mayors" stated the second serious problem as "refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece". The following problems "the rapid spread of Coronavirus among the refugees" and "the claim that the information about the refugees during the pandemic is not disclosed" might reflect the idea that refugees are a source of threat in public opinion, but this threat is not voiced due to political concerns.

The most common problems voiced by "foreign sources of news" are "the spread of Coronavirus from the refugees to the public" (f=21; %10,5) and "refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece" (f=19; %9,5). The third common problem is "refugees need help" (f=16; %8).

The most common problems stated by "Journalists / Columnists" are "refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece" (f=6; %3) and "refugees need help" (f=5; %2,5). The predominant problem stated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is "the spread of Corona from the refugees to the public" (f=7; %3,5).

The codes in the "other" category are as follows: "Refugees' concern about the spread of Coronavirus to the public" (4), "fugitives stay in the refugee camps (1), “immigrants are sacrificed during the pandemic” (1) and “refugees are a problem for Germany” (1).

Table 8. Adaptation of Refugees

Adaptation	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Not mentioned	34	52	31	117
Not adapted	34	15	13	62
Adapted	1	3	8	12
Neutral	9	0	0	9
Total	78	70	52	200

According to Table 8, refugee image is predominantly “not mentioned” (117), which is followed by the contents involving the judgment “not adapted” (62). There are few contents involving “adapted” or “neutral” judgments about the refugees.

Only 41,5% of the contents reflect refugee image while others do not involve any details about refugees and present them as ordinary people. The contents reflecting a sort of image are predominantly negative. Only 6% of the contents involve “adapted” judgments about the refugees, which supports the belief that they are perceived as a threat.

“Not adapted” images about the refugees were mostly published in Sözcü newspaper while “adapted” images in Sabah newspaper.

4.5. The Attitude Towards Refugees and General Images

In Table 9, the general attitude reflected by the contents regarding refugees is tried to be understood. What is meant here is whether the content is written has a "positive", "negative" or "neutral" attitude. Contents that emphasize that refugees are constantly creating problems are evaluated as "negative", "content based on the need to help refugees" are "positive", and content that does not come up with either attitude and only explains an event without positive or negative comments "neutral". The overall agreement value between coders regarding attitudes is 95%.

Table 9 displays that the general attitude of the contents towards refugees is mostly “neutral” (96). Besides, it can be said that there is a "positive" attitude (69) and a "negative" attitude (35) about the refugees to some extent.

Table 9. The Attitude of the Contents Towards Refugees

General attitude	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Neutral	43	34	19	96
Positive	11	29	29	69
Negative	24	7	4	35
Total	78	70	52	200

Table 9 reveals that the attitude of the contents towards refugees is predominantly “neutral”. This finding is due to the lack of details in the contents. General forensic cases and contents about illegal immigrants do not reflect the attitude of the contents towards refugees. However, a more "positive" attitude than a "negative" one is in parallel with the idea that refugees should be assisted.

The “positive” image of refugees was reflected mostly in Hürriyet and Sabah newspapers while most of the contents with a “negative” image about refugees (24) were published in Sözcü newspaper.

Table 10. Refugee Image

Image	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Irregular and a threat	51	24	22	97
Unfairly treated	17	37	19	73
Sick	7	7	7	21
Helpful /sacrificing	0	1	4	5
Not a clear image	3	1	0	4
Total	78	70	52	200

Table 10 shows the general image of the refugees in the contents. It has been revealed that refugees, who are a threat in some contents, need help / sick, are exposed to unfair practices, and are presented with a benevolent image in some contents.

Table 10 reveals that the refugees stated in the contents have an "irregular and a threat” image (97), which is followed by an "unfairly treated” image of refugees (73). The

Corona virus-infected refugees were in 10,5% of the contents while the percentage for the "helpful/sacrificing refugee" image was only 2%.

The predominance of the "irregular and a threat" image of refugees is consistent with the main theme and sub-themes. This image is followed by "unfairly treated" refugee images, which is related to a "positive" image of the refugees. Besides, the "sick" refugee image was reflected in 10,5% of the contents, which shows that the fear that refugees spread the virus is more frequently on the agenda rather than real sick refugees. The refugees who support the public by producing or the doctor refugees informing patients about the pandemic were hardly voiced in the contents.

It can be said that the "irregular and a threat" image was predominantly published in Sözcü newspaper. "Unfairly treated" image was largely voiced on Hürriyet newspaper while Sabah newspaper published almost the same number of contents involving "irregular and a threat" and "unfairly treated" image of refugees.

4.6. The Images of Men, Women and Child Refugees

In Tables 11, 12, and 13, images of men, women, and children are evaluated separately. While coding the image of the people in the content, first, it was paid attention to whether there is a distinction between men, women, and children in the content or visuals. If so, a separate evaluation was made for each category and the image of the person in that category was coded.

Table 11. The Images of Men Refugees

Image (male)	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Unfairly treated	6	4	12	22
Sick	2	2	4	8
Irregular	1	0	1	2
Helpful/sacrificing	0	0	2	2
Not a clear image	147	134	85	366
Total	156	140	104	400

According to Table 11, "not a clear image" (366) is the predominant male refugee image in the contents. The male refugees with a clear image are mostly "unfairly treated" (22), which is followed by "sick" (8), "irregular" (2), and "helpful/sacrificing" (2).

Since the identities of people in the contents are often unstated, the number of male refugees with an unclear image is quite high. The reason for the common "unfairly treated" image for male refugees might be that personal unfair treatment has a news value. Similarly, "sick" and "irregular" male refugees were also presented in the news in detail because these images also have a news value. Finally, the men who produce masks were published to represent "helpful / sacrificing" male refugees.

Table 12. The Images of Women Refugees

Image (female)	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Unfairly treated	4	6	11	21
Sick	1	2	3	6
Irregular	2	4	0	6
Helpful/sacrificing	0	0	2	2
Not a clear image	149	128	88	365
Total	156	140	104	400

Table 12 shows that the predominant female refugee image in the contents is “not a clear image” (365). The female refugees with a clear image are mostly “unfairly treated” (21), which is followed by “sick” (8), “irregular” (2), and “helpful/sacrificing” (2).

Since the identities of people in the contents are not often stated, the number of female refugees with an unclear image is quite high. Female refugees display a similar image to that of the male ones. The reason for displaying an “unfairly treated” image for female refugees might be that personal unfair treatment has a news value. Similarly, “sick” and “irregular” female refugees were also presented in the news in detail because these images also have a news value. Finally, the women making masks are depicted as “helpful / sacrificing” female refugees.

Table 13. The Images of Child Refugees

Image (female)	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Unfairly treated	7	8	13	28
Irregular	3	5	0	8
Sick	2	1	4	7
Not a clear image	144	126	87	357
Total	156	140	104	400

According to Table 13, the child refugee image in the contents is predominantly “not a clear image” (357). The child refugees with a clear image are mostly “unfairly treated” (28), which is followed by “irregular” (8), and “sick” (7).

Since the identities of people in the contents are often unstated, the number of child refugees with an unclear image is quite high. Like the images of male and female refugees, the predominant image of child refugees is “unfairly treated”. However, a “sick” image was mentioned for women and children less, which might be because the disease affects children the least.

4.7. Visuals

According to Table 14, the visuals in the contents predominantly involve “politicians/mayors” (58), which is followed by “a crowded group of refugees” (43), “journalist/columnist” (17), and young men (wearing masks) (10).

Table 14. Visuals

Visuals	Newspapers			Total
	Sözcü	Hürriyet	Sabah	
Politician/mayor	29	23	6	58
A crowded group of refugees	21	10	22	43
Journalist/columnist	7	7	3	17
A young man (wearing mask)	5	3	2	10
Devoted doctors fighting against Corona/ Mask producing refugees	0	3	4	7
Singer/actor/footballer	4	3	0	7
A general view of the public	5	1	0	6
Health staff and patients (wearing masks)	3	0	3	6
Other	32	24	20	76
Total	106	74	60	240

Some of the codes in the “other” category are as follows: “A woman wearing a mask” (4), “Greek border” (4), “border” (4), “armed soldiers /security guards” (3), “hospital” (3), “cleaning /disinfection staff” (3), “a table or a visual displaying information about Corona” (3), “refugee camp” (3), “refugee children” (3), “patient and ambulance” (3), “old man (wearing a mask) (3), “adult men and a child (sick, in the bed) (3).

Conclusion and Discussion

The results of this study, which aim to show how contents about refugees are presented during the Covid-19 pandemic, are consistent with those of other similar studies in the literature. Since the issue is on the international agenda, “foreign sources” and “politicians/mayors” are two predominant sources of information. Unfortunately, immigrants are the source of information only in 9,5% of the contents, which is considerably lower than high-level institutions and politicians. This finding is consistent with the belief that the problems related to refugees are global problems rather than personal ones. Similarly, the contents have been predominantly published on "agenda", "world" and "columns" sections of study-specific online newspapers, which also confirms this finding.

The main theme of the contents is “refugees as a threat for society” and “unfair treatment of refugees”. Other common themes are “lack of EU support for Turkey”, “Covid-19 positive refugees’ entering Europe” and “call for sensitivity to European countries about refugees”. The predominance of the theme “refugees as a threat” implies a sort of avoidance from refugees and isolating them from society, which is called racism/discrimination in the literature (Roychowdhury, 2020; Koç, 2020). The second main theme reflecting the unfair treatment of refugees is often discussed in the literature (Shrivastava and Shrivastava, 2020; Diad and Nabulski, 2020). “Lack of support for Turkey about the refugee problem” was a common issue mentioned in the literature as well. Similarly, the migration to Greece (Brandenberger et.al., 2020; Koç, 2020) and “call for sensitivity to European countries” were often voiced especially by politicians/mayors.

The most common sub-theme of the contents is "difficult living conditions of refugees", which supports the literature that discusses difficult lives and unfair treatment of refugees (Tanış, 2020). "EU countries' reluctance to host refugees" is not a popular topic in the literature; however, the next most common sub-themes, which are "Covid-19 support for the refugees is a must" and "it is necessary to quarantine the refugees" have been studied and discussed in the literature by researchers (Shrivastava and Shrivastava, 2020). “Refugees’ continuing attempts to enter Greece and the violence they are inflicted to”, which is a dimension of unfair treatment of refugees, is also another sub-theme mentioned in the literature (Koç, 2020).

The main problem emphasized in the contents is "refugees need help", which was voiced by "politicians/mayors" the most. The other common problems mentioned in the contents are "refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece" and "the spread of Coronavirus from the refugees to the public". Thus, despite the awareness about the unfair treatment of refugees, they are still largely perceived as a threat.

"Foreign sources" mostly state the problems "the spread of Coronavirus from the refugees to the public" and "refugees cause problems between Turkey and Greece", which are followed by "refugees need help". The main problem voiced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is "the spread of Coronavirus from the refugees to the public".

The analysis of the problems stated in the contents reveals that the belief that the presence of refugees poses a risk for the health of people living in that country is voiced more strongly than the needs and demands of these refugees. This finding supports the claim that refugees are discriminated against.

Only 41,5% of the contents reflect a sort of refugee image, most of which are negative. This finding also supports the claim that refugees are exposed to discrimination. The contents stating “adapted” image of refugees consist of 6% of the overall contents,

which also support the belief that refugees are a threat to society. The "not adapted" image of refugees was largely published in Sözcü newspaper and the "adapted" image in Sabah newspaper, which indicates the different points of view of these two newspapers.

The predominance of the "irregular and a threat" image of refugees in the contents is consistent with the main theme and sub-themes. The next common image is "unfairly treated" refugees and it is related to the "positive" image. Besides, the "sick" refugee image is reflected in 10.5% of the contents, which shows that the fear of the spread of the virus from refugees to the public is presented rather than sick refugees. The main factor leading to a "positive" image is the presence of refugees making masks and doctor refugees informing patients about the pandemic. "Irregular and a threat" image of refugees is largely reflected in Sözcü newspaper and the "unfairly treated" image in Hürriyet newspaper. Sabah newspaper published the contents involving "irregular and a threat" and "unfairly treated" image almost equally. In other words, it can be concluded that the policies of newspapers are reflected in their images of refugees. "Unfairly treated" image was dominant for male, female, and child refugees, which is followed by "sick" and "irregular" images. It was found that the presence of a "sick" image was quite low for child refugees. Since the contents are discussed within a political framework, the visuals often involved "politicians/mayors". Since immigration is an ongoing process, "crowded refugee groups" were also depicted in these visuals.

As for the health conditions of refugees, immigration policies, and legal limitations, the related literature revealed that the refugees were negatively affected by the opening and closure of the Greek border (Tanış, 2020; sendika.org, 2020). The findings of the current study support the literature. Not knowing where they will live in the future might have affected the refugees' physical and mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, we might conclude that their negative health conditions might have negatively affected public health.

Negative attitudes towards immigrants are related to their problematic situation at the border and their negative effects on the tourism sector as well as the public's general panic about the virus that can spread quickly. The newspapers showed some negative behaviors to refugees and published them. So, in general, the contents have a negative attitude towards negative behaviors.

In short, it can be concluded that unfair treatment of refugees was reflected in the contents although refugees were believed to pose a threat in terms of Covid-19 disease. Besides, while the Greek government's approach towards the refugees was criticized, the lack of EU support for Turkey regarding the refugees was frequently voiced in the contents. It can also be said that politicians ask for help and expect sensitivity from EU countries because of the growing concern about refugees' spreading the disease to the public rather than the spread of the disease among the refugees. The problems of refugees in their inner worlds have never been voiced, not elaborated, or somehow dealt with superficially.

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