



Research Article

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THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS IN TURKEY¹

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ABSTRACT

In this study, it is aimed to examine the working conditions of Syrian immigrants in Turkey. In this framework, this cross-sectional and descriptive study was carried out in survey model. The sample of the study consists of a total of 385 volunteer participants selected by convenience sampling method from Syrian migrant workers in Istanbul. Data were collected both face to face and online survey technique. The questionnaire form includes demographic questions, questions about discrimination and the Working Conditions Scale. SPSS v26 software was used for the analysis of the data. Frequency analysis, reliability analysis, normal distribution analysis, descriptive statistical analysis were performed in the study. According to results, it was determined that the participants mostly worked informally and had an income of approximately minimum wage. It was determined that the participants mostly found a job through their friends and social media. It was seen that the participants were employed in 24 different occupations and mostly worked as workers. The participants stated that they were exposed to discrimination by their employer. Moreover, findings showed that the participants had a perception that they knew their role in the workplace very well but they were exposed to very high job demands, their relationships at the workplace were negative, they had a low level of control over their jobs, they received a low level of support in the workplace, and they were not well informed about the changes in the workplace.

Keywords: Migration, Syrian Refugees, Working Conditions, Discrimination.

SURİYELİ GÖÇMENLERİN TÜRKİYE'DEKİ ÇALIŞMA KOŞULLARI

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki Suriyeli göçmenlerin çalışma koşullarının incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, bu kesitsel ve betimsel çalışma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın örneklemini, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli göçmen işçilerden kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen 385 gönüllü katılımcı oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma verileri anket tekniği kullanılarak hem yüz yüze hem de çevrimiçi olarak toplanmıştır. Anket formunda demografik sorular, ayrımcılıkla ilgili sorular ve çalışma koşulları ölçeği yer almaktadır. Verilerin analizinde SPSS v26 programı kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, katılımcıların daha çok kayıtsız olarak çalıştıkları ve yaklaşık olarak asgari ücret tutarında bir gelire sahip oldukları belirlenmiştir. Katılımcıların daha ziyade arkadaşları ve sosyal medya aracılığıyla iş buldukları saptanmıştır. Katılımcıların 24 farklı meslekte istihdam edildiği ve çoğunluğunun işçi olarak çalıştığı görülmüştür. Katılımcılar işverenleri tarafından ayrımcılığa maruz kaldıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Bulgular, katılımcıların iş yerindeki rollerini çok iyi bildikleri algısına sahip olduklarını ancak çok yüksek iş taleplerine maruz kaldıklarını, iş yerindeki ilişkilerinin olumsuz, işleriyle ilgili kontrol düzeylerinin düşük olduğunu, iş yerinde düşük düzeyde destek aldıklarını ve iş yerindeki değişiklikler hakkında çok az bilgilendirildiklerini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Suriyeli Mülteciler, Çalışma Koşulları, Ayrımcılık.

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1. INTRODUCTION

After the riots and demonstrations that broke out in Syria at the beginning of 2011, approximately 12 million Syrians were displaced and 7 million Syrians had to leave their country. Undoubtedly, neighboring countries were most affected by the mass migration flows. As a result of the increasing war environment, the movement of people from Syria to Turkey has grown (Yeşil, 2017). Currently, there are 3.636.698 Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey (PMM, 2022).

When Syrian immigrants entered Turkey, they first stayed in temporary shelter centers. AFAD provided services to Syrians in these areas by building 26 different temporary shelters in satellite cities, primarily in terms of providing basic needs such as shelter, food and beverage, health, education and training, etc. to Syrians under temporary protection. The number of people staying in temporary shelter centers has decreased over the years, and many of these centers have been closed (PMM, 2022). Currently, a very small proportion of Syrians in Turkey live in temporary shelter centres. The number of Syrians in temporary shelter centers has started to decrease with their movement to the cities in Turkey (PMM, 2022). Entering the working life became a necessity for Syrian immigrants who have started to live in the cities.

On the other hand, Article 29 of the Temporary Protection Regulation regulates labor market access services. Based on this article, the “Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners Under Temporary Protection”, which regulates the access and entry of foreigners under temporary protection status to the labor market, was prepared and entered into force on January 15, 2016, thus paving the way for foreigners under temporary protection to work formally (RWPFTP, 2016). Turkey has provided the right to work, which will allow the Syrians with temporary protection status living within its borders to lead an honorable life, with the legal regulation it has brought (Bidinger, 2015).

It is seen that Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey are integrated into business life in three ways. The first of these is to be included in the working life as an employer by establishing independent companies, the second is to work as workers in the enterprises in the provinces where they are located, and the third is to open independent businesses and work as tradesmen and craftsmen (Korkmaz, 2017). On the other hand, it is seen that Syrians in Turkey mostly work as unskilled workers in labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing and textile (Aygül, 2018). However, there appears to be a gap in the literature on examining the working conditions of Syrian immigrants in Turkey. In this context, this study aims to examine the working conditions of Syrian immigrants in Turkey.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. The Concept of Migration

The concept of migration, which is a multidimensional and dynamic process, has been examined by different disciplines and many different definitions have been introduced to the concept of migration. When the definitions of migration are examined, two main groups are seen. The first considers migration as a geographical/physical mobility, while the second considers it as a mobility with social consequences (Bal, 2011).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has defined migration as crossing an international border or moving within a state. According to the International Organization for Migration, all of the population movements in which people are displaced regardless of their duration, structure and reason should be considered as migration. This includes refugees, displaced persons and economic migrants (IOM, 2013).

According to Marshall (2005), migration is the permanent movement of a small or large number of individuals or groups beyond symbolic or political boundaries towards new settlements and societies. According to Lee, migration is generally defined as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. Lee states that the distance of movement, voluntary or involuntary migration does not impose any restrictions on this definition, and it is evaluated within the framework of the general definition without making any distinction between external and internal migration (Lee, 1966). Zelinsky (1971) sees migration as a permanent or semi-permanent change of place of residence. Moreover, he interpreted it as the change of the social unit and environment in a way that forces or destroys the previous social ties. Based on Zelinsky's definition, it is possible to say that migration has an impact on individuals' social network, cultural bond and sense of belonging. With this aspect, Zelinsky not only considers migration



as a change of position, but also evaluates it as a phenomenon that has the power to change the social structure.

At first glance, migration can only be seen as the experience of people who change their geography. Migration is understood as a journey from one geographical place to another. In its most basic sense, although migration expresses the transition from one place to another, beyond that, it is the social reaction of people to political, cultural and economic changes (Bartram et al., 2014). In other words, people do not intend to change the geography they live in before certain changes occur. Migration, which is a change of place, is the continuation of a chain of changes. A society without migration is not thought of, and a society without migration begins to die. (Ortaylı, 2006).

Migration cannot be defined as just a social mobility or a geographical displacement. With migration, it is considered as a multi-faceted process consisting of many dimensions such as social relations, gender roles, culture, class, status, etc., as well as the living spaces of human groups. The emergence of new job opportunities in cities with industrialization, the migration of individuals living in rural areas to industrial cities in order to benefit from job opportunities, and the need for employers to employ manpower have led to migration mobility. Mixed ethnic groups are formed in regions that receive intense immigration, and different cultures live together. In this sense, different societies can be seen (Giddens & Sutton, 2016).

It has been stated that migration is a socio-religious event. Almost all of the prophets experienced migration at some point in their lives. Migration, which is a part of humanity, has existed since ancient times (Cruz, 2010). Sociologically, migration includes the permanent movement of individuals or groups beyond symbolic or political boundaries towards new settlements and societies and the effects of this movement (Marshall, 2005).

As can be seen, the concept of migration is too broad to be included in a single definition. A single, universal definition of the phenomenon of migration could not be made. In summary, the common point of these definitions is that individuals migrate from their own lands to other lands compulsorily/voluntarily and continue their lives in new living places. The common point about the concept of migration is that immigrants move to new places by crossing borders or staying within borders in order to improve their living standards or to continue their lives due to compulsory situations (Faist, 2000).

2.2. Syrian Migration to Turkey

After the riots and demonstrations that broke out in Syria at the beginning of 2011, approximately 12 million Syrians were displaced and 7 million Syrians had to leave their country. Undoubtedly, neighboring countries were most affected by the mass migration flows. As a result of the increasing war environment, the movement of people from Syria to Turkey has grown. On April 29, 2011, when the entry to Turkey began, Turkey choose to implement an "open door policy". This responsibility was given to AFAD in Turkey, which was unprepared to manage the Syrian migration, which reached hundreds of thousands of people in a short time. Administrative authority remained with AFAD for a long time due to the fact that the migration event was evaluated as an emergency (Yeşil, 2017).

The Syrian migration movement first started on April 29, 2011 with 252 people who entered the Yayladağı district of Hatay. A rapid increase was seen in the number of Syrians under temporary protection living in Turkey over the years. It is possible to talk about a significant stagnation in the entrances from Syria to Turkey after 2017. Currently, there are 3.636.698 Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey (PMM, 2022).

When Syrian immigrants entered Turkey, they first stayed in temporary shelter centers. AFAD provided services to Syrians in these areas by building 26 different temporary shelters in satellite cities, primarily in terms of providing basic needs such as shelter, food and beverage, health, education and training, etc. to Syrians under temporary protection. The number of people staying in temporary shelter centers has decreased over the years, and many of these centers have been closed. Currently, only 7 temporary shelter centers are actively serving in Turkey. These centers are located in Adana, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis and Osmaniye, which are close to Turkey's Syrian border region (PMM, 2022)



A total of 47.885 Syrians live in temporary shelter centers in Turkey (PMM, 2022). This number corresponds to 1.31% of the total number of Syrians in Turkey. In other words, a very small proportion of Syrians in Turkey live in temporary shelter centres. The number of Syrians in temporary shelter centers has started to decrease with their movement to the cities in Turkey (PMM, 2022). Syrian immigrants, who were initially settled in settlements reserved for immigrants in the border region of Syria and Turkey, later dispersed to big cities for various reasons such as finding jobs easily and living economically comfortably.

2.3. Legal Status of Syrian Immigrants

Turkey, which was exposed to mass migration flows after the civil war in Syria in 2011, initially acted with the thought that the civil war in Syria would end in a short time and the mass migration would be temporary, and shaped its policies accordingly (Topal, 2015). Therefore, the definition of "guest", which has no legal equivalent for Syrians, was used by the authorities in the first place and basic human needs such as temporary shelter, food and hygiene were met (Kaya & Eren, 2015). However, Syrians, who are seen as guests who will return to their countries as time goes on, have persisted beyond expectations in Turkey due to the fact that the civil war in Syria has not stopped, and therefore the definition of guest turned out to be insufficient (İzmirli, 2017).

The increasing status debates of the Syrians who fled the war environment in their country and took refuge in Turkey necessitated the introduction of new regulations. Thus, the "temporary protection" status for Syrian migration was introduced with the Law on Foreigners and International Protection No. 6458 on 04/04/2013 and the registration of Syrians living in Turkey as foreigners under temporary protection has been started. Temporary protection is applied to foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, who cannot return to the country they left, who come in mass or individually to find emergency and temporary protection, and who cannot be granted international protection status determination (Temporary Protection Regulation, 2014).

2.4. Legal Legislation Regarding the Work of Syrians

Article 29 of the Temporary Protection Regulation regulates labor market access services. Based on this article, the "Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners Under Temporary Protection", which regulates the access and entry of foreigners under temporary protection status to the labor market, was prepared and entered into force on January 15, 2016, thus paving the way for foreigners under temporary protection to work formally. With the relevant regulation, some rules have been introduced that both the foreigner under temporary protection status and the employer are required to comply with in work permit applications. According to the relevant regulation (RWPFUTP, 2016);

- Foreigners under temporary protection cannot work or be employed in Turkey without a work permit.
- Foreigners under temporary protection can obtain a work permit six months after the temporary protection registration date.
- Foreigners under temporary protection can only get a work permit in the provinces where they are allowed to stay.
- Work permit applications of foreigners under temporary protection are made by the employer.
- A fixed-term employment contract must be signed between the employer and the employee.
- Work permits are issued for a maximum period of one year.
- A 10% employment quota is applied to businesses employing foreigners under temporary protection. In workplaces with 9 or less people, only one foreigner is allowed to work under temporary protection status.

As a result, Turkey has provided the right to work, which will allow the Syrians with temporary protection status living within its borders to lead an honorable life, with the legal regulation it has brought (Bidinger, 2015).



2.5. The Place of Syrians in the Turkish Labor Market

2.5.1. Sectors where Syrians are employed

It is seen that Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey are integrated into business life in three ways. The first of these is to be included in the working life as an employer by establishing independent companies, the second is to work as workers in the enterprises in the provinces where they are located, and the third is to open independent businesses and work as tradesmen and craftsmen (Korkmaz, 2017).

The exclusion of immigrants based on language, ethnicity and racial differences is a factor that narrows the employment opportunities of refugees (Bauder, 2005). Empirical studies show that since 2011, when they started to migrate to Turkey, Syrians mostly work in unskilled jobs. It does not seem possible for Syrians who do not have sufficient Turkish language skills to be employed in skilled jobs (Akgündüz et al., 2017).

It is seen that Syrians in Turkey mostly work as unskilled workers in labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing and textile. In addition, the working areas of Syrian refugees are shaped according to the economic conditions of the provinces where they reside. For example, while Syrians in Gaziantep and Mersin can find jobs mostly in trade and industry, those living in Hatay and Adana make their living by doing seasonal labor. Those living in larger cities such as Istanbul, Bursa and Izmir appear as indispensable actors of the informal sectors. Refugees residing in more rural areas and slums outside the city centers work as peddlers, painters, do all the work given in small businesses or work on their own account in daily jobs. Some Syrians, on the other hand, open their own businesses as tradesmen and craftsmen in areas such as restaurants, patisseries, barbershops, jewelery and clothing (Aygül, 2018). In addition, domestic workers do not want to work in seasonal jobs where working and living conditions are very heavy throughout Turkey. For this reason, Syrian refugees have become an important source of employment in seasonal jobs in the agricultural sector (Ulutaş, 2016).

Although the employment rates of Syrians in Turkey vary according to the provinces, they are mostly employed in non-skilled jobs, textile, construction and service sectors. In addition, researches show that Syrian refugees mostly work in precarious informal sectors. It is known that among the Syrians who have escaped from wars and conflicts in their countries, those who have a professional occupation generally immigrated to European countries, especially Canada and Germany. It cannot be clearly determined how many of the Syrians in Turkey, who are lawyers, doctors, engineers, academics and teachers, practice their profession. In some occupational groups, it is seen that their professional identities are not recognized due to the lack of diploma equivalence and they cannot practice their profession. (Aygül, 2018).

2.5.2. Entrepreneurship of Syrians

Migrant entrepreneurs in the labor market have been one of the areas of discussion in the literature for many years. It can be said that immigrants make important contributions to the development of employment, market and economy through the social networks they have created among themselves. External environmental prejudices and the development of the idea of the “foreigner” have a compelling effect on immigrant communities to stand on their own feet. Thus, they try to meet their general economic needs by forming employment areas among themselves (Vinogradov & Isaksen, 2008).

Syrians in Turkey have started to participate in production, although not yet on a large scale. Shoemakers, bakeries and shops owned by Syrians contribute to the economy. Since they produce and sell in the way they are used to, Syrians shop from these businesses. On the other hand, due to the fact that some of these businesses operate illegally, do not pay taxes and cause unfair competition, they are frequently criticized by local tradesmen (ORSAM, 2015).

The investment areas of companies established with Syrian joint capital have generally been for business lines that carry out commercial activities. Companies operating in wholesale trade and retail trade in particular are followed by the companies operating in sectors such as real estate, construction, food, travel agency, education and transportation (TEPAV, 2019).

2.6. Effects of Syrians on Turkish Labor Market

It can be said that there are two different views in the literature regarding the effects of immigrants on



the labor market. First, the increase in migrant labor, especially due to mass migration movements, increases the total labor supply and may lead to a decrease in wages. This is based on the assumption that the migrant workforce is a substitute for the domestic workforce. Another view is the assumption that immigrants are not a substitute for, but a complement to the domestic workforce. Thus, immigrants do not compete with the domestic workforce (Borjas, 2015).

While the employment of Syrians as cheap and unregistered labor causes an increase in the competition arising from the labor supply in the labor market, this situation causes the employment of the local people in the economic lower and middle strata to be negatively affected (Salur & Erdoğan, 2017). The density of Syrians, especially in border provinces, creates perceptions among local people that they are out of their jobs due to Syrians (Oytun & Gündoğar, 2015). This situation, on the other hand, causes the local people to react to the Syrians and increases the risk of social conflict between the two communities.

While the entry of Syrians into the employment market has an impact on unemployment, on the other hand, the threat posed by increasing unemployment also causes the working conditions of the local workforce to decrease, especially wages (Kaygısız, 2017). As a matter of fact, researches and reports show that in general, most of the Syrians are unskilled, so they work in jobs they can find without any job preference to provide for their family, without even being paid a certain wage. Therefore, this situation causes pressure to decrease the wages of workers and also causes the income distribution to be negatively affected in the long run (Salur & Erdoğan, 2017).

In addition to all these, there are also contributions made by Syrians to the workforce. Syrians, who came to Turkey with their capital, both established their own businesses and created job opportunities for the local people. While this situation primarily provided the development of the regional economy, it made a significant contribution to the Turkish economy in general. As a matter of fact, the number of companies with at least one Syrian partner reached a high figure of 15,159, while the number of Syrians employed in these companies was expressed as 10,046 (Sönmez, 2014). On the other hand, the increase in the cheap and unskilled labor force, which negatively affected the local people, made a positive contribution to the costs of investors and tradesmen. In addition, the increase in the Syrian unskilled workforce has also been effective in closing the gap in some sectors where local workers do not want to work (Tunç, 2015).

2.7. Working Conditions of Syrians

Syrian immigrants in Turkey generally work in unskilled and labor-intensive jobs. Immigrants are mainly employed in the textile, construction, production and agriculture sectors. Syrian workers tend to work in the worst working conditions without basic labor and social rights, especially by taking over seasonal agricultural jobs and low-skilled jobs in the textile and service sectors. The reason why immigrants are employed in unskilled and insecure jobs requiring harsh working conditions is explained by necessity based on language, education and financial problems (Özpinar et al., 2016).

Syrians who cannot legally participate in working life by obtaining a work permit have to work informally, for low wages and without insurance. It is seen that Syrians working informally in Turkey are mostly working in daily jobs especially in agriculture and manufacturing sectors. In the construction and clothing sectors, it is known that Syrians are employed by closing the employment gap created by local citizens who do not want to work in these areas due to heavy working conditions (Korkmaz, 2018). The fact that immigrants often work in illegal and unsecured jobs also causes them to receive very low wages. Syrian workers are generally exploited by labor brokers and are thought to be substituted for local workers (İçduygu and Diker, 2017).

Informality, which affects working conditions and causes social tensions, is becoming a major problem. Integrating language courses into vocational training, increasing Syrians' access to these programs, increasing the capacity of major service providers such as İŞKUR, creating funding opportunities for civil society working in this field and encouraging entrepreneurship with low-interest loans can have a positive impact on the transition to formal employment (İçduygu & Diker, 2017).



2.8. Prejudice and Discriminations in the Labor Market

The sources of discrimination encountered in the labor market are discussed in three different ways in the literature: employer, co-workers and market (consumer).

Employer Discrimination: Employer discrimination refers to the situation where employers segregate and categorize their workforce based on different personal characteristics. It is known that this distinction can be built on different characteristics such as gender, age, race, language, religious thought, minority membership, disability, immigrant status, etc. In order to talk about employer discrimination, the employer must not act equally between employees or job seekers with equivalent characteristics. Discrimination regarding equal qualifications is widely practiced for women and ethnic groups. It seems that as a result of discrimination, differences in employment opportunities and wages can arise between equals (Mehmet & Kılıç, 2009).

Discrimination by Co-Workers: It is known that discriminatory practices against employees in the labor market are generally caused by their colleagues (Demant et al., 2006). According to the approach of classical economists, employees may be exposed to discrimination by their colleagues/colleagues if there is high unemployment in the region where they live and disproportionate earnings are high (Glenn, 2009). It is seen that employment and earnings conditions are effective in the emergence of discriminatory behaviors. In the research of Houtzager and Rodrigues (2002) on the exclusion of non-Western immigrants in the labor market, it is stated that entrenched prejudices in the society prevent immigrants' opportunities in the labor market. After getting a job, non-Western immigrants may encounter colleagues who do not accept them in the workplace (Houtzager & Rodrigues, 2002).

Market Discrimination: Customers in the market may show a discriminatory attitude due to the personal characteristics of the workers working in the workplaces where goods and services are offered. In this case, consumers or customers change their preferences in terms of employee profiles in the relevant workplace, regardless of the product or service produced. In consumer, customer or market discrimination, the position of the discriminated person is important. Persons working in a job or position that requires frequent contact with customers may be exposed to discriminatory behavior due to their constant visibility. Thus, it is not possible for some employees to stand out in jobs and professions where interaction is high. Being in the background and not being able to take part in some positions can have a multi-faceted effect. This situation can create inequality in promotions and wages among employees (Borjas, 2015).

2.9. Types of Organizational Discrimination

Organizational discrimination is defined as exhibiting different or negative behaviors towards employees and making some institutional arrangements due to internal (such as age, ethnicity, gender, physical characteristics, race, culture, language, sexual orientation) and external (education, family structure, social status, income level, entertainment habits, personality type, geographical orientation, settlement, marital status, military experience, political opinion, economic situation, citizenship, religion, personal values, work experience, etc.) factors in organizations (Córdova & Cervantes, 2010). The types of organizational discrimination that are frequently encountered in the literature are discussed below.

Gender Discrimination: Gender discrimination is defined as any distinction, exclusion and restriction made on the basis of roles and norms due to socially constructed gender (Spears Brown et al, 2010). In other words, gender discrimination refers to all kinds of discrimination, exclusion and restriction aimed at preventing women from enjoying their rights in political, economic, cultural or other fields (Dalkıranoğlu, 2006).

Sexual Orientation Discrimination: Sexual orientation discrimination is the exclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) individuals from the labor market through dismissal, forced resignation, sexual harassment and humiliation in working life. Due to the externally perceived image of the workplace, sexual orientation is not mentioned in the explanations regarding the dismissal of this workforce (Doğan, 2012).

Racial Discrimination: As a form of oppression, racism is the belief that biological differences between human races must also determine cultural, economic, organizational or individual problems and that one



race (usually own race) is superior to others and has the right to dominate others, or is a doctrine or organized system that accepts these values (Bratter & Gorman, 2011). In this type of discrimination, there is a doctrine of superiority based on racial difference (Kim, 2015).

Age Based Discrimination: Age-based discrimination is the process of prejudiced and negative attitudes towards people, as well as all kinds of discrimination, exclusion and restriction due to their age. Although age discrimination is seen for both the young and the old, it affects the elderly more (Cheung et al, 2011). The tools used by employers in age discrimination include less chance of promotion for older workers, heavier workload, dismissal of older workers first, refusing job applications of the elderly, and reducing only the wages of older workers (Cheung et al., 2011).

Disability Discrimination: In today's working life, physically and mentally disabled employees working in almost every organization are exposed to various negative discriminations. The undesirable behavior of the manager and some employees to a disabled employee or employee candidate and justifying this behavior or attitude can be expressed as discrimination against the disabled. In other words, disability discrimination is the failure of the owners and managers of the organization to assign a task appropriate to the situation of the employee and to excuse this failure (Seymen & Bolat, 2005).

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Model

In this study, it is aimed to examine the working conditions of Syrian immigrants in Turkey. In this framework, this cross-sectional and descriptive study was carried out in the survey model. In the study, the working status of Syrian immigrants in Turkey is revealed and examined in terms of demographic factors.

3.2. Research Questions

The research questions determined in line with the purpose of the study are presented below.

RQ1: How is the working life of Syrian refugees in Turkey? What are their employment channels? What are their working statuses? In which sectors do they work? What professions do they practice? What are their income levels?

RQ2: What are the working conditions (demands, control, support, relationships, role, change) of Syrian immigrants in Turkey?

3.3. Sample

The universe of the study consists of Syrian migrant workers in Turkey. The sample of the study, on the other hand, consists of a total of 385 volunteer participants selected by convenience sampling method from the aforementioned universe.

Data was collected from 403 Syrian immigrant workers who were working in Istanbul at the time of data collection. In the initial review, a total of 18 surveys containing incomplete and/or inconsistent responses were excluded from the study, and the data analysis was conducted with the remaining 385 participants.

3.4. Data Collection

In order to collect data in the study, a questionnaire form consisting of three parts was developed. In the first part of the questionnaire, there are six questions in total regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part of the questionnaire consists of 27 questions using 5 point likert scale regarding the working life of the participants. These questions were created by the researcher utilizing the study of Tutar (2021).

The third part of the questionnaire includes the Working Conditions Scale. Working conditions scale consists of 35 questions under 6 sub-dimensions including demands (1-8), control (9-14), support (15-23), relationships (24-27) role (28-32), change (33-35). The scale questions in the questionnaire are answered in a way to be scored between 1 and 5. The reliability coefficient of the scale was reported as 0.95 (Vatanseven, 2021).

Study data were collected both face-to-face (n=369) and online (n=16). The survey form was transferred to the internet and the link was shared with the participants via platforms such as whatsapp and e-mail.



On the other hand, the questionnaire form was printed and distributed to the participants in Avcılar, Beylikdüzü, Esenyurt and Fatih regions and it was provided to be filled in face to face. Before the survey application, the participants were informed about the research and their voluntary participation consent was obtained.

3.5. Data Analysis

SPSS v26 software was used for the analysis of the data collected in the study. In the study, first of all, frequency analysis was carried out regarding the demographic characteristics and working life of the participants. Subsequently, validity analysis, reliability analysis, normality analysis and descriptive statistical analyzes of working conditions scale were performed.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Demographic Statistics

Demographic statistics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Statistics of the Participants

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	137	35,6
	Male	248	64,4
Age	18-29	247	64,2
	30-39	85	22,1
	40-49	32	8,3
	50-59	21	5,5
Length of stay in Turkey	1-3 years	88	22,9
	4-6 years	105	27,3
	7-9 years	143	37,1
	10+ years	49	12,7
Education	Primary school	42	10,9
	Secondary school	81	21
	High school	42	10,9
	University	163	42,3
	Master	57	14,8
Marital status	Single	204	53
	Married	181	47
Turkish knowledge	Low	80	20,8
	Moderate	214	55,6
	High	91	23,6

In Table 1, it is seen that the sample is mostly male (n=248; %64,4), between the ages of 18-29 (n=247; %64,2), university graduates (n=163; %42,3), single (n=204; %53,0), have been in Turkey for 7-9 years (n=143; %37,1) and have a medium level of Turkish knowledge (n=214; %55,6).

4.2. Findings Regarding the Work Life of the Participants

The first research question of the study is presented below.

RQ1: How is the working life of Syrian refugees in Turkey? What are their employment channels? What are their working statuses? In which sectors do they work? What professions do they practice? What are their income levels?

The answers given to the questions asked to the participants in this context are shown in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.



As seen in Table 2, it has been determined that the participants mostly work informally (n=335; %87,0) and have an income of approximately minimum wage (n=313; %81,3). While 39.7% of the participants have been working in Turkey for 4-6 years (n=153), 62.9% have been working in their current job for 1-3 years (n=242). It is seen that most of the participants work in two different workplaces in this period (n=130; %33,8). It was determined that the participants mostly found a job through their friends (n=133; %34,5) and social media (n=131; %34,0).

Table 2. Findings Regarding the Work Life of the Participants

Variable	Category	n	%
Working status	I work informally	335	87
	I work registered	50	13
Monthly income	0-5.000 TL	21	5,5
	5.000-10.000 TL	313	81,3
	10.000-15.000 TL	41	10,6
	15.000+ TL	10	2,6
In how many different workplaces have you worked in Turkey?	1	81	21
	2	130	33,8
	3	93	24,2
	4	22	5,7
	5	42	10,9
	6	11	2,9
	7	6	1,6
How many years have you been working in Turkey?	1-3 years	109	28,3
	4-6 years	153	39,7
	7-9 years	88	22,9
	10+ years	35	9,1
How many years have you been working at your current job?	1-3 years	242	62,9
	4-6 years	99	25,7
	7-9 years	43	11,2
	10+ years	1	0,3
From which channel did you find your job?	My social friends	133	34,5
	Internet/Social media	131	34
	My social relatives	64	16,6
	Got an offer from the company	41	10,6
	Personal application	16	4,2



In Table 3, it is seen that the participants have 24 different professions and mostly work as workers (n=119; %30,9).

Table 3. Findings Regarding the Occupation of the Participants

Occupation	n	%	Occupation	n	%	Occupation	n	%
Worker	119	30,9	Construction	15	3,9	Real estate	8	2,1
Translator	28	7,3	Receptionist	14	3,6	Plastic collector	7	1,8
Delivery guy	22	5,7	Baker	12	3,1	Car rental	6	1,6
Logistics	22	5,7	Salesman	11	2,9	Blacksmith	4	1,0
Barbar	21	5,5	Tailor	11	2,9	Restaurant manager	1	0,3
Shoes shop	21	5,5	Hair dresser	10	2,6	Journalist	1	0,3
Teacher	18	4,7	Engineer	9	2,3	Nutritionist	1	0,3
Trade	16	4,2	Garbage worker	8	2,1	Total	385	100,0

In Table 4, it is seen that the participants work in 8 different sectors. The top three sectors are production sector (n=149; %38,7), services sector (n=87; %22,6) and real estate and rental sector (n=43; %11,2), respectively.

Table 4. Findings Regarding the Sectors of the Participants

Sector	n	%	Sector	n	%	Sector	n	%
Production	149	38,7	Logistics	41	10,6	Tourism	10	2,6
Service	87	22,6	Construction	35	9,1	Health	2	0,5
Real estate and rental	43	11,2	Education	18	4,7	Total	385	100,0

4.3. Findings Regarding Discrimination

Participants responded to the discrimination-related statements on the survey form using a five-point scale. The findings regarding the discrimination of the participants by their employers are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Findings Regarding Discrimination by Employer

Type	Item	Sub Mean \pm sd
Employer discrimination	My employer is discriminating against me.	3,91 \pm 1,25
	My employer treats me unfairly.	3,80 \pm 1,32
	My employer pays me a lower salary.	4,21 \pm 1,15
	My employer gives me more workload.	4,24 \pm 1,20

As can be seen in Table 5, the participants have a perception to be discriminated against mostly by their employers (\bar{x} =4,04; sd =0,88). In this context, the participants stated that they were mostly given an excessive workload by their employers (\bar{x} =4,24; sd =1,20).

The findings regarding the discrimination of the participants based on their gender, age and race are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Findings Regarding Discrimination Based on Gender, Age and Race

Type	Item	Sub Mean \pm sd
Discrimination based on gender	My employer discriminates against me based on my gender	2,77 \pm 1,55
Discrimination based on age	My employer discriminates against me based on my age	2,76 \pm 1,38
Discrimination based on race	My employer discriminates against me based on my race	4,38 \pm 1,15



As can be seen in Table 6, the participants have a perception to be discriminated against mostly based on their race ($\bar{x}=4,38$; $sd=1,15$). On the other hand, it is seen that their perception regarding discrimination based on gender ($\bar{x}=2,77$; $sd=1,55$) and age ($\bar{x}=2,76$; $sd=1,38$) have relatively lower levels.

4.4. Reliability Analysis

The results of the reliability analysis of the Working Conditions Scale used in the study are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Reliability Analysis Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Demands	8	,870
Control	6	,895
Support	9	,871
Relationships	4	,882
Role	5	,897
Change	3	,846

In Table 7, it is seen that the reliability coefficient of all dimensions of the Working Conditions Scale is above 0,80. It is stated that the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient above 0,80 indicates that the scale is at a high level of reliability (Şahin & Gürbüz, 2014). In this context, it was concluded that the Working Conditions Scale used in the study was highly reliable.

4.5. Descriptive Statistics

The second research question of the study is presented below.

RQ2: What are the working conditions (demands, control, support, relationships, role, change) of Syrian immigrants in Turkey?

To answer this question, the descriptive statistics of the participants' responses to the Working Conditions Scale are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Descriptive Analysis Results

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Demands	4,27	,81	-1,296	1,041
Control	1,97	1,09	1,087	,159
Support	1,95	,89	1,044	,142
Relationships	3,78	1,05	-1,019	,389
Role	4,39	,69	-1,238	1,650
Change	1,50	,84	1,901	2,848

It is seen that the demands dimension has a very high value ($\bar{x}=4,27$; $sd=0,81$). This indicates that respondents are very highly exposed to demands such as heavy workload or short time to complete work.

It is seen that the control dimension is at a low level ($\bar{x}=1,97$; $sd=1,09$). This indicates that participants have low control over issues such as how and when to do their work.

It is seen that the support dimension is at a low level ($\bar{x}=1,95$; $sd=0,89$). This indicates that the participants take low levels of support, such as help and resources, from their managers and co-workers.

It is seen that the relationship dimension is at a high level ($\bar{x}=3,78$; $sd=1,05$). This dimension of the scale measures negative situations in workplace relationships. In this context, this finding indicates that the participants perceive negative relationships in the workplace.

It is seen that the role dimension is at a very high level ($\bar{x}=4,39$; $sd=0,69$). This shows that the participants have a very high level of knowledge of their roles in the workplace, such as their responsibilities and what is expected of them.

It is seen that the change dimension is at a very low level ($\bar{x}=1,50$; $sd=0,84$). This shows that participants are not well informed about what changes in the workplace are and how to implement them.



On the other hand, in order to determine which of the parametric or non-parametric analysis techniques will be used in the study, it was examined whether the data conformed to the normal distribution. It is stated that the skewness and kurtosis values between -3 and +3 indicate that the data are normally distributed (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2014). Table 8 shows that the skewness and kurtosis values of all dimensions of the Working Conditions Scale are within the specified range. In this framework, it was concluded that the data conformed to the normal distribution, and thus, parametric analysis methods were used in the study.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, it was aimed to examine the working conditions of Syrian immigrants in Turkey, however our study have faced some limitations; thus the findings have to be interpreted cautiously. Firstly the study was limited to examine only the Syrian employees and workers, so the result might not reflect the conditions of the Syrian entrepreneurs and work owners in Turkey.

Secondly, the study was conducted by convenience sampling, and the result may not be completely generalizable for whole Turkey, since the sample was only taken from Istanbul. As a suggestion for further studies, the study can be replicated with a larger sample including other parts of the country, to see weather the results are specified to a region or can be generalized for the country as a whole.

To shift back and conclude the results of our study, the work lives of Syrian refugees were examined. According to results, it was determined that the participants mostly worked informally and had an average income around the minimum wage. This finding shows that Syrian refugees face difficulties in the labor market in Turkey, that informal work may create problems in protecting the rights of workers and pave the way for employers to pay less. It was also found in the study that most of the participants had been working in Turkey for 4-6 years, and had been working in their current job for 1-3 years. It was seen that most of the participants worked in two different workplaces in this period. It is evaluated that the finding that the participants work in more than one workplace despite their short working time reveals the importance of registered work once again. In addition, it was determined in the study that the participants mostly found a job through their friends and social media. This finding is considered to show the importance of networks for employment. In the study, it was seen that the participants were distributed in 24 different occupations and mostly worked as workers. It was also determined that the participants worked in 8 different sectors. The top three sectors were seen as production sector, services sector, and real estate and rental sector, respectively.

Later in the study, the questions related to discrimination were examined. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the participants stated that they were exposed to discrimination by the employer. In terms of employer discrimination, it was seen that “giving more workload” came to the fore. On the other hand, it was determined that the participants stated that they were mostly exposed to discrimination based on their race, and that they were exposed to relatively lower levels of discrimination based on gender and age. These findings show that employers tend to give Syrian refugee workers more workload for less wages. In this context, it is thought that union protection is important, but the prerequisite of being a registered employee comes to the fore again.

Then, the scores of the participants from the Working Conditions Scale were examined in the study. The results of the analysis showed that the demands and role dimensions had very high level, the relations dimension had high level, the control and support dimensions had low level, and the change dimension had very low level. These findings show that the participants have a perception that they know their role in the workplace very well but they are exposed to very high job demands, their relationships at the workplace are negative, they have a low level of control over their jobs, they receive a low level of support in the workplace, and they are not well informed about changes in the workplace.

This study reveals the problems of Syrian immigrants' labor force participation in Turkey and the difficulties caused by these problems. The results of this study can help policy decisions to be taken to create better working conditions and encourage their participation in the workforce for Syrian refugees living in Turkey. In addition, this work can help the international community pay more attention to the problems experienced by Syrian refugees and allocate more resources to humanitarian work. In this context, this study presents a series of suggestions for improving the working conditions of Syrian refugees in Turkey. Some suggestions are:



- To facilitate the job search process for Syrian refugees, more official channels should be used, and employers should be better informed about hiring refugees. Additionally, formal translation support can also be provided within this scope.
- To prevent informal work, Syrian refugees should be provided with more information about work permits, and employers should be required to comply with legal regulations that prevent informal work.
- To improve job roles and relationships in the workplace, employers should be educated about the rights of Syrian refugees in the workplace, and they should openly communicate with refugees to address any problems they face at work.
- To develop the professional skills of Syrian refugees, language and vocational training programs should be provided.
- To prevent discrimination by employers, penalties should be enforced in accordance with laws that prohibit discrimination.

On the other hand, for future studies, it is recommended to examine the relationship between the working conditions of Syrian refugees and variables such as well-being, job satisfaction, motivation, performance, and life satisfaction. Finally, situations of other minorities should be investigated both in Turkey and in other countries, with the aim of providing humane work conditions for all employees.

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