



Evaluation of Social Services and Assistance for Syrians Under Temporary Protection in the 100th Anniversary of the Republic: Case Study of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality

Cumhuriyetin 100. Yılında Geçici Koruma Altındaki Suriyelilere Yönelik Sosyal Hizmet ve Yardımların Değerlendirilmesi: Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği

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ABSTRACT

Migration is one of the problems of the 21st century. Millions of people have become immigrants for reasons like poverty, income inequality, civil wars, armed conflicts, famine, etc. In the process of the Arab Spring, which showed its effect in the Middle East, internal turmoil also occurred in Syria, and as the incident turned into a civil war, more than 6 million Syrians had to leave their country. Neighboring country Turkey, which is one of the first choices of Syrians, has been one of the countries most affected by Syrian migration, both with its geographical proximity and its "open door" policy. The settlements most preferred by the Syrians who migrated to Turkey have been the big cities. Gaziantep is the second metropolitan city with the highest number of Syrians after Istanbul. The aim of the research is to evaluate the aid activities of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality for Syrian immigrants. In this context, news about Syrians in the news portal of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality were compiled and coded, and the data were prepared for analysis. With the help of Maxqda Analytics Program, the data were analyzed, explained and evaluated using visual tools. As a result, it has been seen that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality is engaged in activities aimed at Syrians in terms of "education, activities for children, and ensuring social cohesion". It can be said that there are problems throughout the city in terms of protecting the urban identity and developing the infrastructure capacity. It has been understood that issues such as the inability to control unregistered employment are effective in this regard.

Keywords: Migration, Temporary Protection, Syria, Metropolitan Municipality, Gaziantep.

öz

Göçler, 21. yüzyılın problemlerinden birisidir. Yoksulluk, gelir adaletsizliği, iç savaşlar, silahlı çatışmalar, kıtlık vb. nedenlerle milyonlarca insan göçmen durumuna gelmiştir. Ortadoğu'da etkisini gösteren Arap Baharı sürecinde Suriyede de iç karışıklıklar yaşanmış, olayın iç savaşa dönüşmesi ile 6 milyondan fazla Suriyeli ülkelerini terk etmek zorunda kalmıştır. Suriyelilerin ilk tercihleri komşu ülkeler olmuş, Türkiye, hem coğrafi yakınlık hem de "açık kapı" politikası ile Suriyeli göçünden en fazla etkilenen ülkelerin başında yer almıştır. Türkiye'ye göç eden Suriyelilerin en çok tercih ettiği yerleşim yerleri ise büyük kentler olmuştur. Gaziantep, İstanbul'dan sonra en fazla Suriyeliyi barındıran ikinci

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büyükşehir konumundadır. Araştırmanın amacı, Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin Suriyeli göçmenlere yönelik yardım faaliyetlerini değerlendirmektir. Bu çerçevede, Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin haberler portalındaki Suriyelilere yönelik haberler derlenerek kodlanmış ve veriler analize hazırlanmıştır. Maxqda Analytics Programı yardımıyla veriler analiz edilmiş, görsel araçlar kullanılarak açıklanıp değerlendirilmiştir. Sonuçta Gaziantep Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin "eğitim, çocuklara yönelik faaliyetler ve sosyal uyumun sağlanması noktalarında Suriyelilere yönelik faaliyetlerde bulunduğu görülmüştür. Kent kimliğinin korunması ve alt yapı kapasitesinin geliştirilmesi hususlarında ise kent genelinde sorunlar yaşandığı söylenebilir. Büyükşehir belediyesinin mali imkânlarının Suriyelilere yönelik yardımlar için yetersiz kalması, kayıtdışı istihdam kontrol altına alınamaması gibi hususların bu konuda etkili olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Geçici Koruma, Suriye, Büyükşehir Belediyesi, Gaziantep.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is one of the most important problems of the 21st century which urgently needs to be solved. It is an ongoing process, changing form, scope and quality throughout history. States have difficulty in finding solutions to immigration, sometimes they have to face this reality, either compulsory or optionally. The recent migrations from Syria continue to occupy international and national agendas.

The struggle that started in Syria in March 2011 pushed the Syrians to seek safe lands. When the "open door" policy was added to its geographical proximity to Syria, Turkey became the first and most preferred country for immigrants. According to the data of the Directorate of Migration Management, 3,284,679 Syrians live under temporary protection status in Turkey. At this point, the increase in the number and spread of immigrants has made migration management difficult and necessitated the development of new policies. Most of the Syrians who come to Turkey live in big cities. Gaziantep, with a population of 430.659, is the metropolitan city that hosts the highest number of Syrians after Istanbul (Directorate of Migration Management, 2022). In this regard, in addition to geographical proximity, the policies of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality (Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality) towards Syrian immigrants have also been decisive. Local governments are obliged to provide services to their non-citizens in addition to the duties assigned to them by law. Since most of the foreigners served by the metropolitan municipality in Gaziantep are victims of the Syrian civil war, the services related to these can be considered within the scope of social services/aid.

The aim of the research is to evaluate the social services and aids provided by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality for Syrians under temporary protection. In this context, firstly, under the title of literature summary, the concepts of refugee, immigrant and asylum seeker were explained, and the legal status of the Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey was evaluated. Secondly, the data collection method and analysis technique used in the research are explained under the title of research method. Thirdly, the research findings are explained with the help of figures. Finally, document analysis was made by using the news on the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's website and containing the activities carried out within the territorial boundaries of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, and the findings were presented on the mappings. These findings were evaluated in the context of the literature, and the research was completed with some suggestions.

Legal Context and Conceptual Confusion of Persons under Temporary Protection in Turkey

As migration is a complex process, it brings along conceptual differentiation. Concepts such as refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and those under temporary protection are often used interchangeably, making the process difficult to understand. In particular, immigration from Syria and the confusion of legal status have pushed countries to seek solutions. In this context, it is necessary to explain the situation in the context of the developments in refugee law and in a conceptual sense.

The 1951 "Geneva Convention Relating to the Legal Status of Refugees" (1951 Refugee Convention) and the 1967 "Protocol on the Legal Status of Refugees" are the regulations that deal with the refugee issue first and foremost. Turkey is a party to both the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. However, by limiting the date and geographical area of the Convention, Turkey stated that it would cover those who sought asylum in Europe before 1 January 1951. It was also stated in the 1967 Protocol that the geographical area limitation continued and that only asylum requests from Europe would be granted "refugee" status (Topal, 2015: 9-10). Turkey's territorial narrowing stance towards refugees has been criticized for making it very difficult for non-Europeans to seek asylum (Hoffman & Samuk, 2016: 6). Mass migration from Northern Iraq in 1991 caused Turkey to

prepare its own legislation. In this context, in 1994, with the adoption of the "Regulation on the Procedures and Principles to be Applied to Individual Foreigners Who Have Taken Asylum in Turkey or Requested a Residence Permit from Turkey to Take Asylum in another Country and Foreigners Who Came to Our Border for Collective Asylum and Possible Population Movements", individuals who come from outside Europe and meet the necessary conditions are accepted as "asylum seeker". In the process of harmonization with the EU, the "Foreigners and International Protection Law" numbered 6458 was adopted in 2013 in order to ensure the harmonization of legal regulations regarding refugees and asylum seekers with the EU acquis (Topal, 2015: 9-10).

International protection types are listed in the Foreigners and International Protection Law. Accordingly, the types of international protection include refugee (Art. 61), conditional refugee (Art. 62), and secondary protection (Art. 63). In the Foreigners and International Protection Law, it has been stipulated that individuals who are forced to leave their country can be provided with temporary protection (Art. 91). Temporary Article 1 of the Temporary Protection Regulation stipulates that the regulation applies to Syrian citizens and stateless persons and those coming from Syria.

In the light of historical developments, the meanings of immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker and temporary protection status can be defined briefly. In the 1951 Refugee Convention, "refugee" is defined as a person who leaves the country of his citizenship because he fears that he will be subject to prosecution because of his race, religion, nationality, belonging to a certain social group or political opinion, and who does not or does not want to return to his country due to fear (UN, 1951). An asylum seeker is defined as a person who has left their country and is seeking protection against persecution and serious human rights violations in another country but has not yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is awaiting a decision on the asylum claim. Since seeking asylum is a fundamental human right, it means that everyone should enjoy this right and be allowed to enter another country (AI, 2022). Although there is no internationally accepted definition of the concept of migrant, it generally represents people who cross the border in search of better economic opportunities and move to improve their living standards (UNHCR, 2018). In this sense, it is used to express immigrants, refugees, and non-refugees. For example, those who settle in another country to work, study, or live with family members in another country are considered as immigrants (Amnesty International, 2022). Temporary protection regulation defines "temporary protection" as the protection status granted to foreigners who are forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country they have left, who arrive at or cross the borders collectively or individually during a mass influx (Art. 3).

From the conceptual framework in question, how should the "temporary protection" status granted by Turkey to Syrians be evaluated? First, it is known that Turkey does not consider those coming from outside Europe as "refugee" on the legal basis. In the Turkish legal system, there is no equivalent for the status of "refugee" anymore. In this context, in the Temporary Protection Regulation based on the Foreigners and International Protection Law numbered 6458, Turkey evaluated those who migrated from Syria within the scope of "temporary protection" status and found a temporary legal solution.

Social Services and Assistance in Municipal Laws

There are three local government units in Turkey: municipality, special provincial administration, and village. In addition, metropolitan municipalities, which are considered as municipalities with a special status, are also accepted as local government units. In this context, social services carried out by municipalities should be handled within the framework of the Municipality Law No. 5393 and the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216.

Municipality Law No. 5393 includes extensive regulations on social services and assistance. There are provisions regarding social services in the 13th, 14th, 15th, 60th, 69th and 77th articles of the Law. In the article titled "citizen law" of the Law, the right of citizens to benefit from municipal aid is mentioned, and the obligation to provide this aid in a way that does not harm human dignity is emphasized (13/3). Article 14, which regulates the duties and responsibilities of municipalities, states that municipalities can carry out or have activities such as social services, social aid, and vocational and skill training if they are shared locally. In the same article, it is mentioned that it is necessary to open shelters for women and children in metropolitan municipalities and municipalities with a population of over 100,000. Following this, the duties, and responsibilities of municipalities regarding construction, maintenance, and repair in areas such as education, health and places of worship are listed. In addition, it was mentioned that methods appropriate to the situation of the disabled, elderly, destitute and low-income people will be applied in service delivery (14/1). In Article 15 titled "Powers and privileges of

municipalities", it is emphasized that the municipality will engage in all kinds of activities and initiatives to meet the local common needs of its citizens (15/1). In the same article, it is stated that metropolitan municipalities within the provincial borders, provincial municipalities within the borders of the municipality and adjacent areas, and municipalities with a population exceeding 10,000 can allocate real estate, with the decision of the council, for projects such as education, health and social services, provided that it is used in line with its purpose, with the approval of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. (15/6). In paragraph 1 of Article 60 titled "Municipal Expenses", social services and aid to be provided to low-income, poor, needy, orphans and disabled people are evaluated within this scope (60/1). In Article 69 titled "Land and Housing Production", it is stipulated that land can be allocated for those exposed to disaster (69/3). Finally, in Article 77 titled "Voluntary Participation in Municipal Services", solidarity in the town is stated in the municipality's health, education, sports, environment, social services and aid, library, park, traffic, and cultural services, as well as services for the elderly, women, and children, the disabled, the poor and the needy. It is emphasized that programs can be organized for the participation of volunteers to ensure participation and increase effectiveness, savings, and productivity in services (77/1).

Law No. 5216 included regulations regarding social services and responsibilities, most of which are like Law No. 5393. According to Article 7 titled "Duties and Responsibilities of Metropolitan and District Municipalities", metropolitan municipalities are responsible for constructing buildings and facilities for health, education, and cultural services, performing all kinds of maintenance and repair of buildings and facilities related to these services belonging to public institutions and organizations, and providing the necessary material support. In addition, to carry out and develop large health centers, hospitals, mobile health units and all kinds of social and cultural services for adults, elderly, disabled, women, youth and children, and to establish social facilities for this purpose, to open, operate or have operated vocational and skill training courses, Cooperating with universities, colleges, vocational high schools, public institutions and non-governmental organizations while carrying out these services is listed among the duties and responsibilities of metropolitan municipalities (7/1).

When these regulations are evaluated as a whole, it can be said that both the Municipality Law No. 5393 and the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216 include detailed regulations on social services and aid.

Although the fact that Syrians are so densely settled within the borders of Turkey is the subject of another discussion, the analysis of the current situation is important. In this context, regardless of the nature of migration, the basic needs of individuals living within the borders must be met. Providing social aid and services for Syrians provides a mutual benefit. First, it is ensured that the basic needs of those who escaped from the Syrian civil war and settled in the country are met and that they live a life worthy of human dignity. In this context, it is important to increase the living standards of disadvantaged groups, especially women, children, the elderly and the disabled. Secondly, meeting the basic needs of Syrians and ensuring social integration is expected to serve the security of cities and the preservation of their urban identity. However, it is also known that such gains take time and are costly. In this context, it is also known that the migration problem should be addressed at the local level. As a matter of fact, Syrians continue their lives within local communities in this context. Therefore, local governments need to provide and coordinate housing, education, health, employment, and services for disadvantaged groups. Meeting the basic needs of Syrians and providing services such as education, health and psychosocial support shorten the adaptation process and contribute to reducing the social and economic effects of the migration process to the country. In short, there is a close relationship between municipal laws, social services, and immigrants. While municipal legislation draws the limits of what can be done for immigrants at the local level, social services serve to ensure integration and help reduce the problems that immigrants may pose.

Social Services and Assistance Provided by Local Governments to Refugees in the World

Local governments around the world carry out similar activities for refugees, although there are differences in their practices. These activities are rather aimed at meeting basic needs and achieving harmony with the local people. In this context, it is necessary to clarify the issues of social service and social assistance, which are closely related to each other. Social aid is divided into two: in-kind and cash aid. Cash aid includes cash payments to individuals in need. These benefits include old-age benefits, disability benefits, child benefits, and unemployment insurance. In-kind aid covers issues such as housing, education, health, food, and social services.

For example, Japan puts local governments at the forefront in providing services to foreigners migrating to their country and making them a part of local communities. One of the main focuses of the activities carried out is

educational activities aimed at removing language barriers. In this context, language lessons are provided for foreigners for free or at affordable prices (Aiden, 2011). The city of Barcelona, Spain, has also developed a formal plan called Ciutat Refugi to support city services and resources and collaborate with local NGOs, charities, and service provider organizations to accommodate migrants. The city council and local NGOs have opposed discourses that interpret immigrants as the "other" and eliminate wrong attitudes about immigrants (IOM, 2017). In Germany, a network of local NGOs, charities and activist alliances provide health, housing, legal and financial assistance to non-status immigrants. This network also strongly opposes exclusionary immigrant and refugee discourses. It also supports local coexistence for all immigrants regardless of their status (IOM, 2017). Chile has an important representation in social services for refugees. Since the re-establishment of a democratic government in 1990, responsibilities have been gradually transferred from the national government to regions and municipalities, allowing the country to implement innovative initiatives and programs to provide education, healthcare and other social services for immigrants (IOM, 2017).

Local authorities' actions towards refugees depend on their own economic capacity and social support networks, as well as on the way national governments respond to urban crises. While cities act as amplifiers of inequality and vulnerability, they can also act as catalysts for social and economic change and offer concrete opportunities for those displaced to find lasting solutions (Council of Europe, 2019: 8).

Municipalities as one of the Main Actors of Migration Governance and the Background of Local Migration Policies

Cities and local governments play a central role in migration management. National policies cannot adequately respond to the complexity of migration processes because they fail to take local differences into account. The cooperation of different actors such as local governments, civil society, national governments, and the private sector, and taking responsibility for migration governance have a facilitating effect on the success of migration processes. In this context, although migration management is a process handled at the national level, local actors have important responsibilities in the fields of education, health, infrastructure, and social cohesion. As a matter of fact, as in many local problems, it is known that local governments have the capacity to identify problems and produce solutions faster than national governments in the migration process.

The economic and social interests, institutional framework, political culture, immigrant rights, existence of non-governmental organizations, social movements and national welfare system are the constitute migration policies at the national level. To assess whether these factors are applicable at the local level, the special circumstances of the municipalities need to be taken into account (Schammann vd., 2021: 3).

The degree of centralization, legal and structural discretion, and institutional rules governing interactions at the local level are decisive in the formulation of local migration policies. In addition, it is accepted that the roles of local actors are decisive in determining policies. Conflicts or cooperation between actors at the same level as well as between different levels can affect local migration policies. Again, the importance of local discourses on creating immigration policy cannot be denied in this context. It is also possible that such discourses can affect both perceptions of the local situation and policies regarding immigration and immigrants. In other words, the magnitude of migration has an accelerating effect on the transformation of local policies (Schammann et al., 2021: 3-5). For example, the fact that many Syrians in Turkey live in urban areas creates difficulties for local governments. In addition, the concentration of decision-making authority in the central government in Turkey prevents local governments from taking sufficient responsibility in migration processes (Lowndes & Polat, 2020: 1-2). Even though local governments are considered as one of the main actors of migration governance, the inadequacy of institutional infrastructures in this regard is pointed out (Kara & Dönmez-Kara, 2016: 15).

There are three ways to ensure social cohesion of immigrants and to improve their coexistence with local communities: personal relations, official and socio-economic relations with government institutions (Kaya et al., 2021: 15). While the lack of social cohesion between local communities and refugees leads to tensions, there may be problems such as the perception of host communities as competitors in the job market. Although little research has been done on the impact of Syrians on the local labor markets of host countries, the perception of Syrians as competitors hinders the development of economic opportunities for them (Speakman, 2019: 271).

Municipalities are one of the main actors in the integration and meeting basic humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees. The importance of municipalities, which are the local implementers of national-level policies for Syrian refugees, is also emphasized on a global scale. The fact that the municipalities in the region are exposed to intense migration has not only differentiated the service delivery of the administrative units, but also brought

them to assume key roles in the integration of refugees and crisis management. Immigrants have put pressure on the service capacity of municipalities, especially neighboring Syria, and have caused reactions from the local people. It can be said that the economic and social problems brought about by the COVID-19 process are also effective in increasing the reactions.

Various international meetings are held with the participation of Turkey to solve the problems in Syria. For example, a workshop on "Mediterranean Municipalities at the Forefront of Refugee Crisis" was held in Amman, Jordan, in 2016 with the support of organizations such as the Mediterranean Integration Center (CMI), World Bank (WB), and the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ). Approximately one hundred and forty participants, including seventy municipal representatives from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Turkey, and Europe, as well as seventy municipal representatives from central government, civil society, as well as development and humanitarian organizations, gathered at the workshop. How to foster regional exchange and learning between communities on best practices and innovative solutions to bring refugees and host communities to the common well-being was discussed. In the workshop, it was pointed out that the municipalities on the Syrian border were most affected by the refugee crisis, based on the similarity of the problems faced by the municipalities. It has been stated that municipalities lack the necessary human resources, technical, planning and management skills and financial resources to deal with the Syrian refugee crisis. In addition, the need for more cooperation and support between central governments, international organizations, NGOs and the private sector in tackling the refugee crisis was emphasized (CMI, 2016).

In the workshop where it was mentioned that there is a need to identify the best practices and solutions within the municipal services, it was stated that the priority areas are waste management, water supply, shelter, strategic planning, social services, health, education, higher education and employment. In addition, it was emphasized that communities should strategically address issues such as social cohesion and psycho-social support (CMI, 2016). As a matter of fact, the increase in the demand for basic services such as waste management and shelter, together with the migration from Syria, has forced the municipalities to expand their responsibilities in their traditional duties (World Bank, 2016).

In the workshop, the production of permanent solutions for refugees from Syria is realized through comprehensive protection and solution strategies. In this context, the voluntary return of refugees to Syria should be planned when (UNHRC, 2022):

- 1) supporting the resilience of the host country and society,
- 2) ensuring that refugees are self-sufficient, including access to services, legal employment opportunities and livelihoods,
- 3) expanding access to resettlement and other complementary means in third countries,
- 4) providing the conditions for a safe and sustainable return.

International actors recognize the indispensable role of local actors. They point out that it would be more beneficial to encourage local and national humanitarian actors to contribute to the process instead of changing them (Meral et al., 2021; Betts et al., 2017: 24). However, the contributions of actors often do not go beyond appreciating Turkey's efforts. Turkey's insistence on international solidarity (Batalla & Tolay, 2018: 4) does not find sufficient response in the international arena.

It is recognized that the United Nations (UN) agencies and other international organizations should take more responsibility. For example, although Gaziantep's strategic location is seen as an advantage for local actors, activities are limited. Through partnerships with UN agencies, the MEU receives capacity building assistance on waste management and recovery. Within the framework of another project with UN agencies, the municipality and the Chamber of Industry are conducting vocational training focused on the employability of Syrian refugees in the service and industry sectors. However, this situation is frequently criticized by local authorities and NGOs, as the cooperation framework remains limited despite the developments (Betts vd., 2017: 24).

An Overview of the Geographical Distribution of Syrian Migrants

The civil war in Syria in March 2011 has displaced millions of people from their homes. Immigration from Syria has affected many countries economically, culturally and socially. European countries have approached the problem of Syrian refugees cautiously, exhibited a conservative attitude, and implemented uncompromising policies to avoid their negative externalities. The most important indicator of this situation is the statistical data. The European countries, which accept a limited number of refugees, did not even choose the refugees in this

limited number, but accepted the Syrians with the quality and merit that would provide added value to their countries. On the other hand, the situation in countries close to Syria geographically and culturally has changed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Turkey has adopted an “open door” policy regarding Syrians, and this is reflected in the number of Syrians. Again, the fact that the Syrians registered outside of Turkey are located in the same geography is the proof of the situation in question.

According to the UN's 2022 data, most of the registered Syrians migrated to neighboring or nearby countries. At this point, besides the geographical and cultural proximity, the attitudes of the countries have been decisive. Of the approximately 5.5 million Syrian refugees, 3.6 million were registered in Turkey, 825 thousand in Lebanon, 676 thousand in Jordan, 261,000 in Iraq, and 144 thousand in Egypt. In the period between 2016 and 2022, only 346 thousand refugees returned to their countries voluntarily (UNHCR, 2022). At this point, although there has been a proportional increase in voluntary returns by 2022, it is seen that it is far from the desired acceleration. The European Union (EU) has made a commitment to help Turkey with the Syrian refugees. At the Turkey-EU Summit held in 2015, the European Commission pledged 3 billion euros for Turkey and stated that if it was not enough, it would find an additional 3 billion euros in half. The EU has paid 4.3 billion euros of the 6 billion euros it has committed. In addition, the EU has made promises to Turkey on issues such as visa exemption, EU membership and the expansion of the Customs Union (<https://multeciler.org.tr/>, 2021). However, the EU did not fulfill its commitments on these issues and statements were made that would distract Turkey. As a result, the unity of discourse and action did not occur.

The fact that Turkey is the country that takes the most responsibility for Syrian refugees has made the country's economy difficult. Those under temporary protection are mostly settled in the metropolitan cities of the country. Considering the distribution of approximately 3.6 million refugees who fled the civil war in Syria and settled in Turkey, the top 10 provinces with the highest number of Syrians (Directorate of Migration Management, 2022):

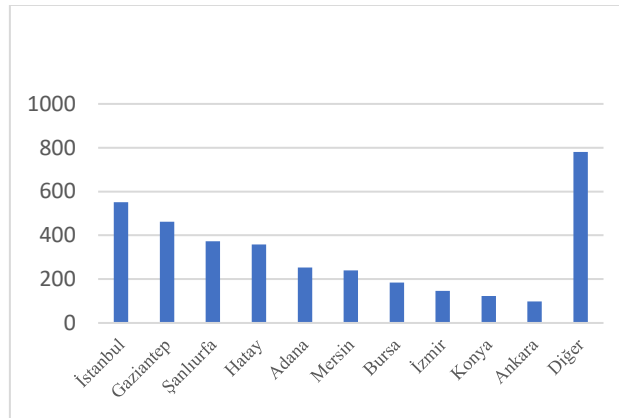


Figure 1: Distribution of Registered Syrians in Turkey by Provinces

Accordingly, the province with the highest number of Syrians was İstanbul with 532 thousand, followed by Syria's border neighbors Gaziantep with 430 thousand, Şanlıurfa with 310 thousand and Hatay with 292 thousand. One of the conclusions to be drawn from the distribution of the population is that the Syrians mostly settled in the most developed provinces of Turkey and generally preferred settlements close to the border.

2) Research Method

In the method section, the purpose and importance of the research, scope and limitations, design and research group, data collection method and analysis technique, validity and reliability were evaluated.

Purpose and Importance of the Research

The purpose of the research shows why the research is done and which problems it will offer solutions to. In this context, the purpose of the research should be stated clearly and understandably. In addition, the reader wants to learn what benefit will come out of solving the problem (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2011: 180; İslamoğlu, 2003: 43). Determining the purpose of the research is important in terms of facilitating the determination of the necessity of the research and what kind of research should be done (Glesne, 2013: 50).

The purpose of this research is to determine in which areas the activities carried out for the immigrants from Syria in Gaziantep are concentrated. In other words, it is to reveal the areas of activity that are missing, if any. In

addition, it is aimed to determine how effective the activities carried out in the province of Gaziantep at the point of preservation of local culture are. Therefore, answers to the following questions were sought in the study:

- a) In which areas have services been produced for Syrians in Gaziantep?
- b) Is there any group that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has given priority among Syrians?
- c) Does Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality have activities to protect urban culture?

Integration of Syrian refugees is among the main issues of interest to countries such as Turkey, which have experienced intense migration. Syrian refugees have faced problems related to health, shelter, food, education, spoken language, and psychology. One of the actors involved in an active struggle to overcome the problems of refugees migrating from Syria has been metropolitan municipalities. The attitude of the metropolitan municipalities facilitates the adaptation process of Syrians, prevents the spread of crime, especially juvenile delinquents, and increases the safety of the city. Therefore, classification of the activities carried out by the metropolitan municipality in the example of Gaziantep province and revealing the deficiencies/deficiencies are important in terms of both contributing to the fight against xenophobia and marginalization and protecting the local culture.

Scope and Limitations of the Research

It is not possible to handle and evaluate a subject in all its aspects in research. Time and resource impossibilities prevent the study of the research subject from all aspects. Therefore, the limits of the research subject should be revealed (Islamoglu, 2003: 47).

The study covers Syrians under temporary protection status who migrated from Syria to Gaziantep from the beginning of the Syrian civil war in March 2011 to 2022. The fact that the province of Gaziantep was chosen as an example was determined by the fact that it was the province with the highest number of Syrians after Istanbul, and that it also had a border with Syria. In addition, the research was limited to news and in this context, the news on the web address of Gaziantep BB was taken as a basis (<https://gaziantep.bel.tr/tr>).

Research Design and Research Group

The research was designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. Case study refers to the approach developed by using more than one event or people to solve any subject, phenomenon or problem (Güler et al., 2015: 173). The fact that Gaziantep is geographically close to Syria and has to host many Syrians can provide important data about the activities carried out for Syrians. The choice of case study research in the study is to eliminate the complexity of the Syrians problem, which is accepted to exist in Turkey, to determine at what level and in which areas the activities are concentrated, and to reveal what kind of problems the Syrians issue raises in the city. Additionally, the activities carried out by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality can guide cities in similar situations. In this context, the activities carried out by Gaziantep Büyükşehir Municipality towards Syrians have been examined in depth and revealed.

Data Collection Method and Analysis Technique of the Research

Document analysis method was used in the collection of research data. All kinds of written sources, newspapers, magazines, books, encyclopedias, reports and letters recorded for the past are considered as document scanning. Accessing written data is both easier and more reliable (Kozak, 2015: 97). In this context, from the 6,869 news items on the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's website from March 15, 2011, when the Syrian civil war began, to November 30, 2022, 101 news about Syrians were identified. The reason why no local newspapers other than the website of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality were used in the research is that the scope of news of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality is wider. In other words, there is limited news in the local media about the activities carried out by the Buyuksehir Municipality towards Syrians. In addition, the website of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality was preferred, based on the assumption that it can present the activities carried out by a metropolitan municipality in the most systematic way. Again, an attempt was made to reach the decisions of the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Council, but it was seen that the decisions were not accessible.

The data were analyzed by content analysis technique. Content analysis is accepted as the process of exporting meaning (Erdoğan, 2007: 249). Content analysis is the interpretation of the content of the texts turned into written documents within the framework of certain concepts and themes, arranging them in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016: 242). It is a technique that provides a methodical, systematic, objective and, if possible, quantitative analysis of texts (Bilgin, 2014: 2). The data were categorized into fourteen

themes. Accordingly, employment, humanitarian aid, social cohesion, children, urban identity, publicizing the problem of Syrians, educational activities, environmental awareness, multi-actor cooperation, health services, financial difficulties, infrastructure services, women and security activities are the themes of the research.

Among the themes of the research, themes such as employment, humanitarian aid, social harmony, children, educational activities, health services and women are subjects that can be directly considered as social services and aid. In addition, the themes of urban identity, environmental awareness, multi-actor cooperation, financial difficulty, infrastructure services and security activities are issues closely related to the social services in question. First of all, there are several reasons why urban identity was determined as the theme. One of these is important because urban identity expresses the dependence of individuals or groups on the city. Because this situation facilitates the work of the municipal personnel who provide services to the people living in the city, in determining the needs and solving the problems. Secondly, the increase in cultural and social diversity in Gaziantep province due to Syrian migration necessitates the protection of local culture and communities. Some activities need to be carried out in order to preserve the identity of the city in Gaziantep, where 430 thousand Syrians live According to official data. Finally, urban identity can play a helping role in how people deal with needs such as housing and poverty. Secondly, the reason for including the theme of environmental awareness is that migration from Syria poses threats to the welfare of citizens living in the region. Protecting the local people, especially in terms of health and economy, has a facilitating effect in preventing threats that may arise from migration movements. At this point, it is important to identify the activities carried out by Gaziantep BŞB and reveal the deficiencies. Additionally, providing consultancy to immigrants in combating environmental problems can also be considered as a part of social services.

Thirdly, in determining the theme of multi-actor cooperation, the assumption that this cooperation could achieve improvements in the size of social services and aid was effective. This situation necessitates the determination of how often Gaziantep BŞB, which is not in a sufficient position on its own in the Syrian issue, cooperates with local, regional, national and international actors. Similarly, in world practices, many countries have started to develop partnerships at various levels.

Fourthly, the reason for determining the theme of financial difficulty is the close relationship between financial means and social assistance and services. Municipalities must have sufficient financial resources to provide social services and assistance. In addition, municipalities' opportunities to find solutions to sudden population increases such as Syrian migration may be limited. On the other hand, the municipality's facilities can enable it to use its resources effectively and efficiently. Therefore, the extent to which Gaziantep BŞB includes financial difficulties in its news provides important outputs in determining social services and opportunities.

Fifthly, the reason for organizing a theme of infrastructure services is that the infrastructure capacity of the city, whose population increases with the migration from Syria, will be strained and this situation may threaten public health. In this context, it is important to determine whether Gaziantep BŞB has made improvements to the infrastructure. Additionally, improving infrastructure can facilitate healthcare while ensuring the protection of public health. Again, having a reliable infrastructure in a city can facilitate access to social services such as education.

Finally, with the theme of security activities, the issue of what kind of activities Gaziantep BŞB includes to prevent possible threats to the security of the city by Syrians who are faced with situations such as violence, unemployment and poverty is discussed. In this context, the municipality's fight against crime and violence will serve the security of the city. In this context, it is possible for social services to put forward preventive measures and rehabilitation programs aimed at the origins of crime.

Validity and Reliability of the Research

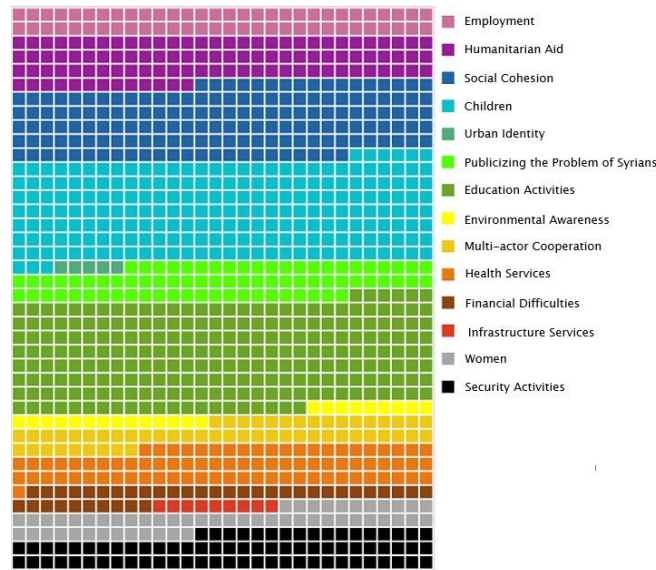
The concepts of validity and reliability used in quantitative and qualitative research have different representations. The concepts of validity and reliability in qualitative research are internal validity-credibility, external validity-transferability/transferability; internal reliability-consistency, external reliability-confirmability concepts. Credibility is related to the reality of the findings obtained by the researcher, the validity of the research results in similar environments, the consistency of the processes with each other, and the collection and presentation of data with an objective approach (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016: 277-283). The fact that the research data is obtained from the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality web address, that the internet address is open to access, and that everyone who conducts similar research has the opportunity to access these data can be shown as evidence for the authenticity of the research findings. In the data collection and analysis processes, a consistent way was followed as much as possible. The data were collected and presented in an objective and unbiased manner. Since qualitative studies tend to examine events or phenomena in detail, the concept of

transferability is preferred over the concept of generalizability (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016: 283). The reproducibility of the research was ensured by others, as the news on the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality web page were documented and analyzed in the collection of data. At the same time, it was tried to look at the data from an outside perspective, and care was taken to be consistent in the collection, coding and analysis processes of the data. The results obtained in the research were confirmed by the research data and findings and explained to the reader in a logical way.

3) Findings of the Research

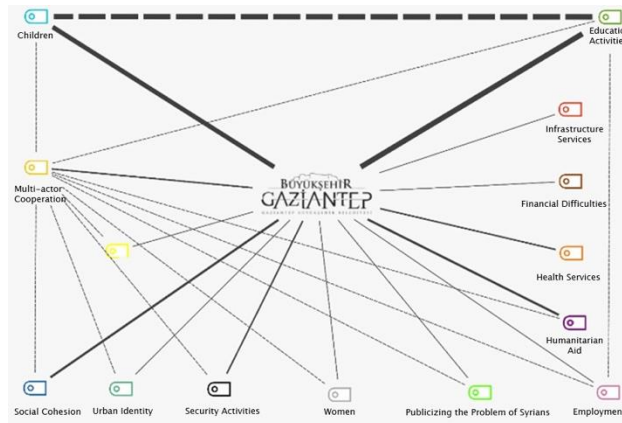
The news that constitutes the subject of the research were compiled from the web address of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, and themes were created after similar concepts were brought together. Maxqda Analytics Program was used to analyze and visualize the data and to show the relations of the themes with each other.

Figure 2: Document Portrait on News



In Figure 2, there is a "document portrait" obtained by coding the news about Syrians obtained from the "Haberler" portal of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's website and turned into a single document. Figure 2 was created by using the document portrait menu in the visual tools window of the program. Accordingly, among the above-mentioned codes, the first three codes in the news portal were education activities, children, and social cohesion, respectively. From this point of view, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's focus on education-based activities for children among disadvantaged groups has the aim of overcoming the psychological problems that may arise in children and minimizing their grievances. In addition, it is not a coincidence that the humanitarian aid code comes after the codes of educational activities, children, and social cohesion. As a matter of fact, it is accepted that the basic needs of Syrian children and adults must be met in order for educational activities to be successful. Therefore, it has been seen that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality focuses on educational activities, especially the education of children, in line with its possibilities, but cannot contribute adequately to the protection of the urban identity and the environment with its infrastructure activities for Syrians. It can be said that the financial stalemate of the municipalities is the determining factor in the emergence of this situation. As a matter of fact, it is known that the activities in the aforementioned areas require large investments and also require a long process. At this point, it can be said that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality focuses on short-term practices rather than long-term activities. Again, health services provided for Syrians are among the most emphasized themes. Activities for the physical and mental health of Syrians were given importance by Gaziantep Büyükşehir Municipality. Psychological support activities were carried out in order to eliminate the scars of war, especially for women and children.

Figure 3: News for Syrians in Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's News Portal



In Figure 3, a single case model was applied to reveal the level of relationship between the themes. Accordingly, it has been seen that educational activities and child contact are closely related to each other. In other words, it is seen that a significant part of the educational activities carried out by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality is for children. This relationship shows itself in the following words of the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Mayor:

“...When we, as Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, investigated this issue, we saw that the children of people staying in camps and staying at home could not go to school. These children cannot go to Turkish schools because they do not know Turkish. Sending them to private schools and English-medium schools is also a big financial burden. Considering this, as Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, we opened a large school for the children of our guests from Syria. Currently, over a thousand children are studying in our schools. Of course, we allow them to do the training in their own language. Education is provided in Arabic. As teachers, we also benefit from people from Syria who have teaching qualifications. So far, we have met the school needs of almost all the children who have applied to us”.

It is understood from Table 3 that social adaptation activities for Syrians are carried out mostly through children. The fact that childhood is a period in which the foundations of emotional and psychological development are laid has been effective in carrying out social adaptation activities mostly through children. In addition, carrying out social cohesion activities through children is also important for the long-term stability and development of societies.

Again, one of the important findings of the research is that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality carries out a significant part of its activities by establishing partnerships. The municipality wanted to share its workload by trying to establish cooperation on education activities, activities for children, humanitarian aid, employment, publicizing the problem of Syrians, environmental awareness, activities for women, security activities, protection of urban identity and social cohesion. For example, the aid provided by the USA for school supplies to Syrians can be evaluated in this context. The US official, who was involved in the humanitarian aid activities of the period, expressed the situation with the following words:

“I have two sons. So I know what the needs of children are. Thank you for having such a beautiful school built in Gaziantep. We thought we'd do something like this as a gift to the children when the schools just opened. We know the children and the conditions under which they live. In return, we wanted to help them. I would like to thank the Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality and the people of Gaziantep, especially the Coordinator Governor, for opening their doors to these people”.

As it can be understood from Figure 3, in the activities carried out by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, although partial aid in kind has been realized, it is seen that there is no cash aid and therefore cooperation has not been realized in this regard. It does not seem possible for Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality to produce a sufficient solution to the Syrian issue with its own facilities and activities carried out with the help of the central government. Examples of this situation appear in urban identity. Although the municipality attaches importance to social integration, education, and registration of Syrians for the preservation of the urban identity, it is possible to see that the expected success has not been achieved, both in the analysis and in the changing structure of the city.

activities carried out. In 2013, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Health Services Department Head of the period stated the activities carried out for Syrian children with the following words:

“As Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, we established this center to provide education opportunities for the children of families who took refuge in our country after escaping from the human tragedy in neighboring Syria. As a municipality, we try to offer all the opportunities we can in this center, where children's adaptations are ensured, and they continue their education life. From time to time, various institutions and organizations also contribute to the work we continue through collaborations”.

With the election of the female mayor, there has been an increase in the variety and number of activities for Syrian women. Although the expression "woman" is not among the most coded expressions, it would be appropriate to focus on it. As a matter of fact, it is known that women are among the groups most affected by the civil war in Syria. In this context, in order to make the voices of women victims of war heard in the international arena, the President of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality brought the issue to the agenda at the G-20 Leaders' Summit. The mayor expressed the problems of Syrian women with the following words:

“We stated that we are with people who have only fear in their bags, who have lost a loved one, who has lost their spouse, who have lost their child, and who have come to save their lives, and that we want to support them. We opened our hearts to them, we opened our table, we opened our home. In this case, we said, 'We have to do whatever we need to do to get you out with the least damage', and 5 years have passed. In fact, the hospitality does not last for 5 years, but a lesson in humanity was given to the whole world here and was shown how to act in accordance with human conscience.

When the activities of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality for disadvantaged groups are evaluated as a whole, it is seen that it is aimed to ensure their adaptation to social life, to eliminate their educational deficiencies, and to overcome the traumas experienced by children and women. In this respect, it can be said that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality acts responsibly and takes extra responsibility within the framework of both the sense of responsibility of being located in the same geography, both the common past and close kinship relations. It has been emphasized that the municipality itself has expressed the issue in international media in the areas in question and that Europe should act more sensitively in this regard. In fact, even these efforts alone show how much Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality embraces the Syrian issue.

In addition to these efforts, one of the striking findings of the study was the interruption of the news flow regarding the activities carried out for Syrians on the official website of Gaziantep Büyükşehir Municipality in recent years. The reasons why this situation occurs may be different. It is debatable whether the Syrian opposition, which has increased in intensity during the pandemic period, is caused by economic considerations or by the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's attention to the unique problems of the epidemic during the pandemic period.

Conclusion

When the Arab Spring spread to Syria in 2011, a civil war started in the country and hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives. The Syrians who had to leave their country were in relocation movements, and Turkey came first among the preferred countries. In Turkey, especially the provinces located on the border had to spend more energy on migration movements, firstly humanitarian and then social activities were focused on. Among these provinces, Gaziantep has become the second metropolitan city with the highest number of Syrians after Istanbul.

Although the units most affected by migration processes are local governments and metropolitan municipalities, the centralization of the authorities regarding migration management and the central character of the policies make migration management difficult. As a matter of fact, it is known that local actors cannot sufficiently participate in the process while determining migration policies.

Although Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has advantages in terms of political relations in the implementation of migration policies, it has difficulties in the execution of services for Syrians, and a significant part of the activities carried out are provided with the support and entrepreneurial capabilities of the central government. While there has been continuity in education, activities for children, social cohesion, humanitarian aid and health since the Syrian civil war, studies on environmental awareness, protection of urban identity, security, and cooperation have remained at a more limited level.

Financial inadequacies are at the root of the problems that Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has experienced in the provision of local services to Syrians. In this context, national authorities, NGOs, and the private sector need to fulfill their responsibilities and act together as actors of migration governance. However, it can be said that coordination-based approaches on the axis of cooperation will reduce the damage caused by the Syrians problem. In other words, the establishment and operation of vertical and horizontal relations in a result-oriented manner and the functional implementation of multi-sectoral coordination are seen as a necessity.

Metropolitan municipalities need to take more responsibility in ensuring social cohesion. At this point, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has carried out important activities and presented successful examples at many points. However, it should be noted that the activities carried out by Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, especially in terms of social cohesion and basic services, are not sustainable. The fact that metropolitan municipalities have to deal with external services when they are not self-sufficient with their own means, while forcing the units, prevents them from fulfilling the services they have undertaken in sufficient variety, quality and speed. It can be said that xenophobia among the local people will increase if the BŞB does not contribute adequately to the activities that will ensure harmony between the local people and those who have migrated from Syria. As a matter of fact, it is necessary to read the recent critical view of the local people towards Syrians from this perspective. In addition, the lack of social cohesion can lead to the marginalization of Syrians and increase the crime rate. Again, more time and resources are needed to combat these negative externalities, and long-term plans rather than short-term implementations should be implemented.

Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality is trying to serve approximately 500 thousand Syrians with almost the same infrastructure, with the integration of those who migrated from Syria into the population. In this case, it brings the strain and erosion of local capacity. In addition, developments in terms of population negatively affect the participation of local people in the workforce. Although Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality tries to go to restrictive practices with quota applications, it has not been successful at the point reached, and it shows itself in the number of Syrians employed by the market. The increase in the number of Syrian-owned businesses in the city and the damage to the urban identity constitute another dimension of the Syrian problem.

Notes on Contributors: ...

Conflict of Interest: *There is no conflict of interest between the authors or any third-party individuals or institutions.*

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