

# ORPHANHOOD AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF SYRIAN CHILDREN IN TÜRKİYE:

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRE- AND POST-CONFLICT PERIODS (2006- 2018)\*

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### *Abstract*

This article examines how armed conflicts influence orphanhood and living arrangements of children and specifically compares Syrian orphan children's living arrangements in the pre-conflict period in Syria and the post-conflict period in Türkiye by using the data of the 2006 Syrian Arab Republic Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (SMICS) and 2018 Türkiye Demographic and Health Survey Syrian Migrant Sample (TDHS-S). The study aims to understand the prevalence and magnitude of orphanhood among Syrian refugee children, to investigate the social consequences of orphanhood and to reveal how various living arrangements of orphaned Syrian children differ in pre- and post-conflict periods. The research employs a comparative analysis based on the descriptive statistics of two datasets. The results of the study indicate that orphanhood among Syrian children has increased in the post-conflict period for all age groups and both sexes. A key finding shows that paternal orphanhood is more prevalent in the post-conflict period among all orphanhood types with a 4.8%. The incidence of not living with a biological parent is highest for the 15-17 age group in Türkiye reaching 17%. The increase in percentages of working children, the general decline in school attendance ratios and high percentages in early marriages are other prominent findings observed in the post-conflict period.

**Key Words:** *Armed conflict, conflict-induced-migration, orphanhood, living arrangements, Syrian refugee children*

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# TÜRKİYE'DEKİ SURİYELİ ÇOCUKLARIN ÖKSÜZLÜĞÜ VE YAŞAM DÜZENLEMELERİ: ÇATIŞMA ÖNCESİ VE SONRASI DÖNEMİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALİ BİR ANALİZİ (2006- 2018)

## Öz

Bu makale, silahlı çatışmaların çocukların öksüz kalması ve yaşam düzenlemelerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemekte, daha özel olarak ise Suriyeli öksüz ve yetim çocukların Suriye'deki çatışma öncesi dönem ile Türkiye'deki çatışma sonrası dönemdeki yaşam düzenlemelerini 2006 Suriye Arap Cumhuriyeti Çoklu Göstergeli Kümeleme Araştırması ve 2018 Türkiye Nüfus ve Sağlık Araştırması (TNSA) Suriyeli göçmen örnekleme verilerini kullanarak ele almaktadır. Çalışma, Suriyeli mülteci çocuklar arasında öksüzlük ve yetimliğin yaygınlığını ve boyutunu anlamayı, öksüzlüğün sosyal sonuçlarını incelemeyi ve Suriyeli öksüz çocukların çeşitli yaşam düzenlemelerinin çatışma öncesi ve sonrası dönemde nasıl farklılaştığını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, iki veri setinin tanımlayıcı istatistiklerine dayanan karşılaştırmalı bir analiz kullanmaktadır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, çatışma sonrası dönemde Suriyeli çocuklar arasında öksüzlüğün tüm yaş grupları ve her iki cinsiyet için arttığını göstermektedir. Önemli bir bulgu, baba yetimliğinin çatışma sonrası dönemde tüm öksüz türleri arasında %4,8 ile daha yaygın olduğunu göstermektedir. Biyolojik ebeveyn ile yaşamama oranının Türkiye'de en yüksek olduğu yaş grubu 15-17 yaş grubunda %17'ye ulaştığı görülmektedir. Çalışan öksüzlerin yüzdesindeki artış, okula devam oranlarındaki genel düşüş ve erken evliliklerin yüzdesindeki yükseklik de çatışma sonrası dönemde gözlemlenen önemli bulgular olarak öne çıkmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Silahlı çatışma, çatışma kaynaklı göç, öksüzlük, yaşam düzenlemeleri, Suriyeli göçmen çocuklar

## INTRODUCTION

As the frequency of wars, armed conflicts, and violence has been escalating over the years, this surge has led to increased humanitarian crises not only within the countries directly affected but also among neighboring nations contending with the consequences of these conflicts. Since March 2011, the aftermath of the Syrian civil war has perpetuated the loss of thousands of civilians and the involuntary displacement of millions of people including women and children. Children, given their heightened vulnerability, emerge as the most adversely impacted segment of the population, constituting a demographic at a higher risk. They confront the severe repercussions of the conflict, encompassing forced migration, family separation, orphanhood, child labor, child soldiering, or exposure to violence. At present, Türkiye is hosting over half of the Syrian refugee population and under UNHCR's mandate, it is estimated that 3.7 million people are under temporary protection with 322,000 asylum seekers and refugees of which 1.7 million of them are children (UNHCR, 2022).

The majority of Syrians who arrived in Türkiye following the conflict originated from the governorates located in the North East and Central regions



of Syria, notably with Aleppo and Idlib experiencing the highest number of migrants (AFAD, 2014). As depicted in Figure 1, the geographical proximity of these governorates to the Turkish border contributes to a substantial influx of Syrians from Aleppo and Idlib to Türkiye, while the least number of migrants arrived from distant governorates such as Quneitra, Daraa and As-Suwayda.

Figure 1. Map of Syrian Arab Republic

Original Source: Adapted from UN Geospatial, Syria Arab Republic, Map No. 4204 Rev. 3, (2012) Modified for clarity and relevance.

Given the background information outlined above, this article delves into the implications of the 2011 Syrian conflict on children, with a specific emphasis on orphanhood and living arrangements. The focus is particularly directed toward Syrian children in both the pre-and post-conflict periods, aiming to comprehend specific changes and outcomes arising from the conflict. Despite the extensive research on armed conflicts and children, the existing literature primarily underscores specific facets of this relationship, emphasizing psychological and physical health outcomes (Bürgin et al, 2022; Le and Nguyen, 2023), or issues such as child soldiering, education and development of the child (Haer, 2019; Cervantes-Duarte and Fernández-Cano, 2016); while the aspect of orphanhood and living arrangements is generally neglected or studied intensely for the HIV/AIDS cases that are located in South Africa region (Gregson et al., 1994; Hosegood et al., 2007; Hill et al., 2008; Beegle et al., 2010; Ardington and Leibbrandt, 2010).

Thus, the main purposes of this article are (1) to examine and compare the orphanhood and living arrangements of Syrian children in the pre-conflict period in Syria and post-conflict period in Türkiye with demographic data, (2) to document the propensity of orphanhood by providing an assessment of the prevalence and magnitude of it among Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, and lastly (3) to understand the survival status of parents and living and care arrangements of orphaned Syrian refugee children in Türkiye by looking into the various contexts in which these children find themselves. Secondary objectives that are closely related to the main purposes are (a) to examine the social outcomes of orphanhood on educational achievement, child/adolescent labor and child/early marriage, and (b) to shed light on the issue of orphanhood and its consequences to raise awareness and inform policymakers for supporting and protecting these vulnerable children.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Literature on Armed Conflicts and Children

The theoretical foundation to understand armed conflicts and wars is vast, complex and diverse encompassing a range of perspectives from various

disciplines that predominantly center on large-scale events. Consequently, the related theories concerning this issue are typically positioned at the macro-level, addressing the overarching impacts of conflict and the numerous factors that either contribute to or resolve conflicts. On the other hand, the relationship between armed conflicts and children -a more specific and focused approach within the context- requires a micro-level point of view as the focus is to understand the individual or group dynamics that shape children's experiences, behaviors or responses. The studies on armed conflicts and children gained significant attention under these micro perspectives which scholars from various disciplines have extensively discussed and analyzed since the late 20th century. In the existing literature, despite the abundance of studies exploring the impact of armed conflicts on children, many of them offer a specific perspective categorized within certain groupings as a part of various academic disciplines. Some of the notable approaches that provide a specific dimension on the impact of armed conflicts on children can be categorized as follows: (1) psychosocial and mental health perspective that primarily focuses on the well-being of the child as well as the psychological effects of armed conflicts on the child (Stichick Betancourt and Khan, 2008, Bürgin et al, 2022); (2) child rights perspective that approaches the issue from a legal dimension including international human rights frameworks and child protection (Richards, 2004; Kures, 2001); (3) child soldier perspective which generally examines the reasons and consequences of the child recruitment in armed conflicts (Wessells, 2017; Haer, 2019); (4) gender perspective as how girls and boys are influenced differently by armed conflicts and how the social norms affect their experiences in general (Singh et al, 2022; Buvinic et al, 2013); (5) education and development perspective which discusses how armed conflicts disrupt the education of children in general affecting schooling and drop-out rates, but also the access to basic services in conflict-affected areas (Poirier, 2012; Bircan ve Sunata, 2015).

Yet, research with a demographic perspective that uses demographic data and analysis on children in conflict-affected areas is very scarce in the literature. From a demographic standpoint, the literature on armed conflicts addresses the issue from two different units of analysis. The first approach

focuses on a broader level and discusses the impact of armed conflicts on the household level in which the effects include changes in the household composition or household welfare (Justino, 2011; Sánchez-Céspedes, 2017; Brück and Schindler, 2009). The second approach tackles the issue from an individual level by concentrating only on children and highlights how armed violent conflicts affect them directly or indirectly. In this article, the second level of analysis that focuses on children will be embraced.

According to Bahgat et al. (2017), the existing data on children who are exposed to conflict are influenced by several factors such as the population density, size of the conflict zones and the share of the under-18 population in which the population density and size of conflict zones determine the number of children who are affected by conflict. A group of studies from this perspective examines the mortality aspect of the conflict focusing on how armed conflicts lead to child deaths directly or indirectly in the form of malnutrition, violence, diseases and lack of access to the healthcare system. Bendavid et al.'s (2021) research, for instance, presents the direct and indirect effects of the armed conflict specifically on women and children by compiling georeferenced child survival data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). The authors concluded that armed conflicts increase mortality among children indirectly, cause acute or chronic malnutrition who are living within the proximity of conflict, induce sexual violence and also lead to mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety or depression. A separate study with a demographic and health perspective investigates the impact of the 2002–2007 armed conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and indicates that the extent of the conflict causes a significant deterioration in the child's health of children aged 6-60 months who live in conflict-affected areas suffered greatly compared to the children in less-affected areas (Minou and Shemyakina, 2014). The detrimental impact intensifies for children exposed to the conflict for a long duration, for children in rural communities and for children living in victimized households.

The other group of studies that can also be identified within the demographic perspective concentrates on migration consequences of armed

conflict, commonly referred to as ‘conflict-induced migration’ (or sometimes conflict-induced displacement) which is frequently recognized as a subset of ‘forced migration’ in the literature. The primary difference between the two is while forced migration is a broader term and encompasses various reasons for displacement such as persecution, human rights violations, environmental disasters, state failure, etc., conflict-induced migration specifically focuses on displacement caused by armed conflicts and the associated violence and instability. Conflict-induced migration generally causes displacement of mass numbers of people, and children constitute a significant proportion of this population. In fact, it is argued that half of the world’s refugees consist of children (Raman et al., 2017). However, regarding the conflict-induced migration in the available literature, either the reason, motivation and decision behind the migration is studied (Adhikari, 2013; Borowiecki, 2013; Schon, 2019; Seven, 2022) or a more generalized approach to the consequences of conflict-induced migration is adopted (Lischer, 2007). Only a few studies have focused on the impact of conflict-induced migration on children. One of those studies discusses the unaccompanied refugee minors who reach the destination countries and examine how they become unaccompanied with a focus on Syrian minors (Ullah, 2018). They highlight that most of the unaccompanied Syrian children are psychologically traumatized and experience high levels of separation stress and anxiety. Regarding conflict-induced migration and children, studies particularly analyze displaced children due to armed conflicts and the challenges they face such as loss of parents, separation from family, access to health and education services and orphanhood in conflict zones.

### **Literature on Orphanhood and Living Arrangements of Children**

It is important to indicate that there is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between armed conflicts, orphanhood and living arrangements of children. Among the few works in the literature, studies that focus on the relationship between armed conflicts and their impact on orphanhood and children’s living arrangements are a handful. Although the issue of children’s orphanhood is studied frequently in academia, the focus is almost always the AIDS-induced orphanhood especially in sub-Saharan Africa or COVID-



induced orphanhood with the recent pandemic; while the conflict-induced orphanhood is less studied, likewise the living arrangements of children.

Within the conflict-induced orphanhood studies, adult mortality as a result of armed conflicts and its indirect effect on orphanhood are particularly investigated. One of those recent studies examine the impact of armed conflict on mortality among 15-49 age women and orphanhood among children who are under the age of 15 in Africa (Wagner et al., 2019). According to the analysis based on the sample of 1,629,352 women and 2,354,041 children under the age of 15, as the conflict intensifies above the median exposure, the risk of orphanhood also increases in proportion following the exposure to conflict by nearly 6%. During the low-intensity conflicts, mortality and orphanhood resulted as statistically insignificant, while the high-intensity conflicts have increased these events. Another study by the same authors also indicates that armed conflicts continually and significantly increase infant mortality rates in Africa and as the conflicts tend to be more chronic meaning that they last at least more than 5 consecutive years, the lingering effects become much greater for child's first year of life (Wagner et al, 2018). It is frequently stressed that especially mother's absence is crucial and has a strong negative effect on the survival of children as mothers are the primary caregivers to children, spending more time with them, performing housekeeping tasks and maintaining connections with the extended kin and neighbors; on the other hand, father's role is primarily economic based on providing goods and services for the household (van Poppel and van Gaalen, 2008).

As orphans, children who are affected by armed conflicts face compelling disruptions and challenges in their living arrangements as well. It is important to note that the literature and the specific findings on the living arrangements of children due to armed conflict usually vary based on the region, the nature and scope of the conflict being studied, and the time being examined. Thus, while it is difficult to make generalizations about the issue, some common themes, trends and key points that are depicted are as follows. Among the 153 million orphans in the world, 116 million are single orphans with a living parent and 14 million of them are double orphans who have no



surviving parent (UNICEF, 2021a). Inherently, the most prevalent form of living arrangement for single orphans is to live with the surviving biological parent. The literature is also in parallel with this observation indicating that in households with high child-parent co-residency, there is a higher likelihood that the children will be living with the surviving parent when one parent dies (Hosegood et al., 2007; Monasch and Boerma, 2004). However, in case both parents are dead, namely the situation for double orphans, kinship care is the second most frequently encountered form of care arrangement where children are taken in and cared by their extended family members. A recent study based on the 2015-2016 National Family Health Survey in India proves this formation highlighting that it is more likely for paternal and maternal orphans to live with their mothers and fathers respectively, followed by their grandparents (Singh and Sekher, 2021). Another study based on Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe, also suggested that the pre-orphanhood living arrangement of children has an important impact on the living arrangements of orphaned children in the aftermath (Shoko and Ibisomi, 2017). Although their focus is mainly the children orphaned by AIDS, their identification may also be correct for conflict-induced orphanhood. The authors argue that living arrangements for orphans vary according to their orphan state. In case the mother dies, the husband asks his relatives to take care of his children, but in case the father dies, his wife usually assumes the headship in the household. If both parents die, the orphans have to be adopted by caretakers or be independent by themselves. Thus, a large number of orphans stay either with the remaining living parent or reside with their extended families. Kinship care is also often considered the most desirable and culturally appropriate type of care as it helps children maintain their connections with their extended family and community. Nonetheless, in situations where kinship care is not available or suitable, orphaned children are often put into institutional care usually in the form of orphanages or residential homes. Despite the wide variance in estimates and the difficulty to gauge accurately, figures indicate that ranging from 2.7 to 5.4 million children are considered to be in various forms of institutional care (UNICEF, 2021b).

Independent living is another form of living arrangement that is generally seen among older orphans who have reached adulthood which could involve living alone or with peers, taking on responsibility and self-sufficiency at a relatively young age. Child-only or child-headed households (CHHs) among this arrangement is a frequent living arrangement for children that usually emerges as a result of huge crises such as conflict, war or HIV/AIDS and their aftermath effects such as the death or disappearance of parents, separation, displacement or economic hardships. Households where all individuals are younger than 18 years are typically called CHHs as the children take the role of the head of the household. Although the definition slightly differs from the Children's Act as they refer to CHHs as households in which the child manages, due to the fact that adults are too sick or too old; the fact that a child assumes headship applies to both situations ultimately. A study conducted in Burundi, a conflict-affected country between 1993 and 2006, finds that CHHs in the camps for internally displaced persons are extremely high (UNICEF, 2009). Usually, there have been social networks that look out for children and orphans in the pre-conflict period; however, in the post-conflict situations, these structures are destroyed leaving children even more at risk. The general opinion in the literature assumes the number of CHHs is increasing and highly prevalent. However, longitudinal data from demographic surveillance systems proved that the rise in orphanhood ratios does not lead to a substantial increase in child-headed households in Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa (Hosegood et al, 2007). In fact, in some towns, very few or no CHHs were identified. Hence, contrary to the existing assumptions, CHHs are a rare occurrence and even for the few cases where children live alone, this situation is often temporal until new family arrangements are established.

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Sources and Method of Analysis

In order to analyze the impact of armed conflicts and conflict-induced migration on children's orphanhood and living arrangements, the case of Syrian children will be examined specifically. A comparative analysis will be conducted by looking at the pre-conflict and post-conflict periods to

understand the orphanhood in a non-conflict environment in Syria where the population was stable and secure without being disrupted by violence and conflict. 2006 Syrian Arab Republic Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (SMICS) will be used for the pre-conflict analysis to present the peacetime situation of children. MICS programs are designed to collect information on the situation of children and women specifically and in 2006 SMICS used a two-stage, stratified, cluster sample design. In the selected sampling, 19019 among 20022 households were interviewed and, in these households, 25026 women aged 15-49 were interviewed successfully in which the data of 48139 children under age 18 were collected. 2006 SMICS data was requested via MICS's website by selecting the country and year of the survey, and the data was accessed after the access permission was granted by the UNICEF MICS team. For the post-conflict period, the most recent 2018 Türkiye Demographic and Health Survey's Syrian Migrant Sample (2018 TDHS-S) will be utilized as a natural reflection of the situation in Syria where millions of people have to migrate to neighboring countries where Türkiye alone hosts the largest population (IOM, 2021). 2018 TDHS-S presents data both on the household and individual level about the demographic and health indicators for the Syrian migrant population living in Türkiye. The sample design used a multi-stage, stratified cluster sampling approach and a total of 1960 households were selected where 1826 of them were interviewed for the survey. Among these households, 2216 women interviews between 15-49 were conducted and information on 5510 children under age 18 was collected successfully (HUIPS, 2019). 2018 TDHS-S data which is available to researchers is first requested through the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (HUIPS) website, and after the data request is approved, the Syrian migrant sample datasets were downloaded and accessed by using a suitable software program.

As a method of analysis, descriptive statistics will be applied by using the IBM SPSS Statistics 26 program based on the datasets of the 2018 TDHS-S 'PR' (household members) file and the 2006 SMICS 'hl' (household members) file. All of the calculations were based on using a weighted sample for both datasets. The small percentage of children for whom the survival status of one or both parents is categorized as "don't know" is made system missing and excluded from the analysis involving orphan status. The data quality and

representativeness are robust and adequate for both datasets; thus, the analysis gives valuable insights into the current situation and sets the stage for future research.

### Construction of Variables

For the analysis, it is important to define the terminology regarding orphanhood as some of the terms are mutually exclusive or inclusive. According to UNICEF, USAIDS and UNAIDS (2004), a child who is under 18 years of age and lost one or both biological parents to any cause of death is defined as an “orphan” and this definition will be used throughout the article. Besides, there are different orphan statuses depending on which family member has deceased. A “maternal orphan” is defined as a child whose mother has died but father alive and a “paternal orphan” is a child whose father has died but the mother is reported to be alive. A child who has lost one of their parents due to death is described as a “single orphan” and those who have lost both of their parents are called “double orphan” and sometimes “true orphan”.

Since the unit of analysis of this study is children, the related variables are constructed in the light of this foundation. The dependent variable therefore is the status of being an orphan which is a categorical variable with multiple levels such as maternal, paternal and double orphans that are calculated with the help of the existing variables in the dataset. For the living arrangements, in addition to the survival status of parents, the information of which family member the child lives with is included in the formation of the variables. The armed conflict in Syria is primarily one of the independent variables. Additionally, demographic factors such as age, sex and country of citizenship, and geographic factors such as region and residence are the other independent variables. Educational attainment, child or adolescent labor and early or child marriages are the outcomes that will be focused on in the analysis to further explore the influence of armed conflicts on orphan children’s lives in the post-conflict period.

## Limitations

Although many factors affect the decision to migrate, it is now a known fact that the armed conflict that began in 2011 has established the root cause for Syrians to seek refuge in Türkiye. The conflict resulted in widespread violence, displacement and the loss of lives for many Syrians including a significant number of children who have lost their parents or guardians due to violence, the destruction of their homes or the overall instability and chaos. However, since the reason of orphanhood is not asked in the questionnaire of 2018 TDHS-S, one limitation is the uncertainty about whether the children are directly orphaned because of the armed conflict in Syria. While the armed conflict is a primary reason, other factors such as displacement, separation from family, and other forms of violence can also contribute to the orphanhood of Syrian children in Türkiye. On the other hand, it is not totally wrong to assume that most of the children who are double orphans or single orphans in Türkiye have probably been orphaned as a result of the direct or indirect effects of the conflict in their home country. The population pyramid and age structure from the 2018 TDHS-S clearly indicate that Syrians in Türkiye have a younger population structure compared to the pre-conflict period in Syria (Koç ve Saraç, 2021). Thus, although not certain, the presence of maternal or paternal orphaned children in Türkiye can be attributed to the reason of armed conflict in Syria as adult mortalities at a young age are not very common and generally lower for adults compared to infants, children or older individuals.

Another limitation is that in the 2006 MICS household members dataset, the relationship between orphanhood and marriage cannot be analyzed for the pre-conflict period due to the lack of information about the marital status of the household members. Therefore, only post-conflict period analysis will be presented for this relationship.



## FINDINGS

### Survival Status of Parents, Orphanhood and Living Arrangements

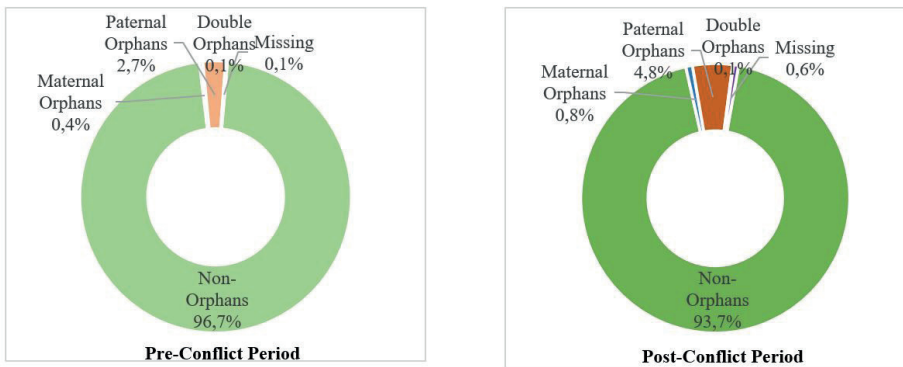
Table 1 illustrates the orphanhood status of Syrian children according to age and sex characteristics during the pre-conflict period in Syria and the post-conflict period in Türkiye. It is observed that the ratio of orphans has increased significantly in the post-war period. The proportion of orphanhood which was 3.3% in the pre-war period, has increased almost twice to 6.3% in the post-war period. While the proportion of double orphanhood remains unchanged, the ratios of maternal and particularly, paternal orphanhood have noticeably increased due to the impact of armed conflict. Upon scrutinizing the table based on gender, there is no notable change between males and females, although there has been an increase in the post-conflict period for both sexes. Furthermore, substantial differences have been identified concerning age. In the pre-conflict period, the proportion of orphanhood, which increases with age, was 7.2% in the 15-17 age group. Upon examining the post-conflict period, it has been observed that this percentage has increased by almost two times, reaching 13%. Another finding highlights that a significant portion of children identified as orphans, especially during the conflict period, are paternal orphans.

**Table 1. Percent Distribution of Syrian Children under Age 18 by Orphan Status According to Age and Sex in Pre-Conflict Period in Syria and Post-Conflict Period in Türkiye, 2006 SMICS and 2018 TDHS-S**

		Non-Orphans	Orphans	Maternal Orphans	Paternal Orphans	Double Orphans	Missing	Total	Number of Children
<b>Pre-Conflict Period</b>									
<b>Age</b>	0-4	99.4	0.6	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	11103
	5-9	97.8	2.3	0.3	1.8	0.1	0.1	100.0	14579
	10-14	95.5	4.5	0.6	3.6	0.1	0.2	100.0	14730
	15-17	92.8	7.1	0.7	5.6	0.5	0.3	100.0	7727
<b>Sex</b>	Male	96.8	3.2	0.4	2.6	0.1	0.1	100.0	24988

	Female	96,5	3,6	0,4	2,8	0,2	0,2	100,0	23150
<b>Total</b>		96,7	3,3	0,4	2,7	0,1	0,1	100,0	48139
<b>Post-Conflict Period</b>									
<b>Age</b>	0-4	98,0	2,0	0,2	1,8	0,0	0,0	100,0	1958
	5-9	94,6	5,4	0,2	5,1	0,1	0,0	100,0	1491
	10-14	91,8	8,2	1,4	6,7	0,1	0,0	100,0	1424
	15-17	87,0	13,0	2,5	9,6	0,9	0,0	100,0	605
<b>Sex</b>	Male	94,0	6,1	0,8	5,0	0,3	0,0	100,0	2876
	Female	94,5	5,5	0,8	4,7	0,0	0,0	100,0	2603
<b>Total</b>		93,7	6,3	0,8	4,8	0,1	0,6	100,0	5478

Figure 2 demonstrates the percentages of non-orphan and orphan during the pre-conflict and post-conflict periods. As per the graph, there is a decrease in the percentages of non-orphans with living parents, while both maternal and paternal orphanhood have increased nearly twofold in the post-conflict period, as a probable impact of conflict.



**Figure 2. Percent Distribution of Orphanhood Status of Syrian Children under Age 18 in Pre-Conflict Period in Syria and Post-Conflict Period in Türkiye**

The orphan and non-orphan children's living arrangements in the post-conflict period in Türkiye can be analyzed through Table 2 which shows the relationship structure and relationship to the head in the household. According to this table, cases where the child is the head of the household, namely, child-headed households are non-existent in Türkiye where orphans live with at least



one adult in the households. For all orphanhood types, households that have three or more related adults are high and as the relationship to head depicts, it can be inferred that these adults are grandparents or siblings of the child. Especially for double orphans, living with three or more related adults (85.7%) has the largest proportion, while living with unrelated adults (14.3%) is also the highest compared to other orphanhood types. Households with one adult and two adults from the same sex are specifically high for paternal orphans compared to other orphanhood types with 8.0% and 6.6% indicating that the mother probably takes care of children alone or with the help of another elder adult in the family.

The relationship of orphaned children to the head of the household appears majorly to be linked to being children or grandchildren, followed by being a sibling. Double orphans generally live with the household head as the niece or nephew by marriage with 42.9%, while this living arrangement is followed equally by living with a grandparent, sibling, other relatives or unrelated adults. Children who are adopted have the highest ratio for maternal and paternal orphans with 2.5% and 2.3% respectively.

**Table 2. Percent Distribution of Syrian Orphan and Non-Orphan Children under Age 18 According to Relationship Structure and Relationship to the Head in the Household in Türkiye, 2018 TDHS-S**

<b>Relationship Structure</b>	<b>Non-Orphans</b>	<b>Maternal Orphans</b>	<b>Paternal Orphans</b>	<b>Double Orphans</b>
No adults	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)
One adult	0.8	(2.5)	8.0	(0.0)
Two adults, opposite sex	40.4	(15.1)	8.1	(0.0)
Two adults, same sex	0.4	(0.0)	6.6	(0.0)
Three+ related adults	57.5	(79.9)	75.6	(85.7)
Unrelated adults	0.9	(2.5)	1.6	(14.3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

Relationship to Head	Non-Orphans	Maternal Orphans	Paternal Orphans	Double Orphans
Head	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)
Wife or husband	0.2	(0.0)	0.4	(0.0)
Son/daughter	84.7	(77.3)	52.4	(0.0)
Son/daughter-in-law	0.5	(2.5)	2.1	(0.0)
Grandchild	9.7	(12.6)	22.0	(14.3)
Parent	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)
Parent-in-law	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)
Brother/sister	0.9	(5.1)	3.0	(14.3)
Co-spouse	0.0	(0.0)	0.0	(0.0)
Other relative	0.8	(0.0)	5.4	(14.3)
Adopted/foster child	0.1	(2.5)	2.3	(0.0)
Not related	0.3	(0.0)	0.0	(14.3)
Niece/nephew by blood	2.4	(0.0)	9.1	(0.0)
Niece/nephew by marriage	0.4	(0.0)	3.3	(42.9)
<b>Total</b>	100.0	(100.0)	100.0	(100.0)
<b>Number of Children</b>	5163	(43)	264	(8)

**Note:** Figures in parenthesis indicates that a figure is based on 0-49 weighted cases.

Living arrangements of the Syrian orphan and non-orphan children in pre-conflict and post-conflict periods based on the 2006 SMICS and 2018 TDHS-S are presented in Table 3 below. The table demonstrates the percentages of Syrian children under age 18 which are grouped according to the survival status of parents, as well as the orphanhood and living arrangement status by highlighting the characteristics such as age, sex, residence and region. Columns (1), (2), (3) and (4) indicate children whose one or parents are alive and the percentages who are living with them; while columns (5), (6), (7), (8) and (9) shows the orphanhood status of children who have lost one or both parents.

Pre-conflict period signifies low levels of orphanhood in all background characteristics; while in the post-conflict period, orphanhood has risen at least

two times for all age groups and sex. The proportion of children whose one or both parents had died (12) has increased from 3.2% in the pre-conflict period to 5.7% in the post-conflict period. Another salient indicator emerges for children who are not living with their biological parents (11) which has increased from 0.7% in the pre-conflict period to 2.9% in the post-conflict period. For children who are under age 18 and under age 15, there hasn't been a significant difference in total numbers except for children who are not living with either parent despite the fact that they are alive (4). In the post-conflict period, while the percentage is 0.7% for children under age 15, it rises to 2.1% for children under age 18 indicating that children are more likely to leave their parents' households at ages 15, 16 and 17.

When the background characteristics are examined, changes are observed according to age, sex, residence and region. Especially in the 15-17 age group and for Syrian regions, there has been a remarkable increase in the post-conflict period compared to the pre-conflict time. On the basis of region, there has been a general decline in the living arrangements of children who live with both parents, on the other hand, a high increase is observed especially in the paternal orphanhood indicators. While paternal orphans who live with their mother (5) in the 15-17 age group was 5.5% in the pre-conflict period, this has increased to 7.1% in the post-conflict period. With the additional 2.3% increase of paternal orphans who do not live with their mother (7), the total paternal orphans in the 15-17 age group (5) + (7) are 9.4% in the post-conflict period. The total orphanhood (12) in the same age group is 12.8%, reflecting an almost two-fold increase compared to the pre-conflict period. The notable increase during the post-conflict period can be elucidated by referring to Table 4, which presents information on school attendance, working status and ever-married percentages of non-orphans and orphans under age 18. According to Table 4, for orphans in the 15-17 age group, attending school decreases significantly for both sexes, while the working status of orphans increases up to 38.2% for males and to 11.9% for females in the post-conflict period, indicating the possibility of adolescent labor. Additionally, the marriage ratio among females in the same age group is elevated at 40.3%, although it is not comparable to the pre-conflict period.

ORPHANHOOD AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF SYRIAN CHILDREN IN TÜRKİYE:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRE- AND POST-CONFLICT PERIODS (2006-2018)\*  
Seda YUMLU, İsmet KOÇ

**Table 3. Percent Distribution of Syrian Children’s Orphanhood and Living Arrangements According to Background Characteristics**<sup>1,2</sup>

Background characteristics	One or Both Parents Alive					One or Both Parents Deceased
	Living with both parents	Living with only mother, father alive	Living with only father, mother alive	Not living with either parent, both alive	Paternal Orphans living with mother	Maternal Orphans living with father
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<b>Pre-Conflict</b>						
<b>Age</b>	0-4	98.1	1.2	0.1	0.0	0.5
	5-9	96.2	1.2	0.3	0.2	1.7
	10-14	93.4	1.4	0.6	0.2	3.5
	15-17	88.8	1.4	0.5	2.0	5.5
<b>Sex</b>	Male	95.1	1.2	0.4	0.1	2.5
	Female	94.0	1.3	0.3	0.8	2.7
<b>Residence</b>	Urban	94.8	0.9	0.5	0.5	2.6
	Rural	94.4	1.6	0.3	0.3	2.5
<b>Regions</b>	North East Syria	94.6	1.1	0.3	0.4	2.9
	Central Syria	94.6	1.2	0.3	0.2	2.7
	South West Syria	94.5	1.5	0.7	0.6	1.9
<b>Total &lt; 15</b>		95.7	1.2	0.4	0.1	2.0
<b>Total &lt; 18</b>		94.6	1.3	0.4	0.4	2.6
<b>Post-Conflict</b>						
<b>Age</b>	0-4	91.7	5.1	0.6	0.4	1.7
	5-9	88.4	4.3	0.8	0.4	4.8
	10-14	82.2	6.1	1.3	1.5	6.2
	15-17	65.1	6.5	1.5	12.9	7.1
<b>Sex</b>	Male	85.0	5.3	1.1	2.1	4.5
	Female	85.8	5.3	0.8	2.1	4.1
<b>Residence</b>	Non-Camp	85.1	5.4	0.9	2.2	4.3
	Camp	89.9	3.4	0.7	0.1	4.2
<b>Regions Türkiye</b>	West	95.7	2.9	0.0	0.0	1.4
	South	93.7	4.7	0.5	0.2	0.4
	Central	86.3	10.0	0.9	1.8	0.0
	East	92.0	4.5	0.8	0.3	1.7
<b>Regions Syria</b>	North East Syria	82.6	5.3	1.0	3.0	5.4
	Central Syria	81.8	7.0	1.1	2.6	4.8
	South West Syria	76.5	5.2	1.8	1.6	13.0
<b>Total &lt; 15</b>		87.9	5.2	0.9	0.7	3.9
<b>Total &lt; 18</b>		85.4	5.3	0.9	2.1	4.3

<sup>1</sup> Administratively, the Syrian Arab Republic consists of 14 governorates, 107 districts and 2480 subdistricts, but for ease of comparison, the 2006 SMICS and 2018 TDHS-S data include 14 governorates of Syria as a variable, which are regrouped and then recoded into three main regions: North East Syria (Latakia and Tartus), Central Syria (Hama, Homs, Latakia and Tartus) and South West Syria (Damascus, Daraa, Quneitra, Rif Dimashq and Idlib and Raqqa).

<sup>2</sup> There are missing values for this table based on the information on the mother or father. The missing values for the 2006 SMICS and 2018 TDHS-S are 1.2% and 1.0% respectively. The highest percentages are observed for 15-17 age group (1.2%) and children in camp areas (1.0%) in the post-conflict period.

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**ound Characteristics in Pre-Conflict Period in Syria and Post-Conflict Period in Türkiye, 2006 SMICS and 2018**

**or Both Parents Dead**

Maternal Orphans living with father	Paternal Orphans not living with mother	Maternal Orphans not living with father	Double Orphans not living with either parent	Total	Percentage not living with a biological parent	Percentage with one or both parents dead	Number of children
(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
<b>Period</b>							
0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.6	11103
0.3	0.1	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.3	2.1	14579
0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	100.0	0.5	4.3	14730
0.7	0.2	0.0	0.5	100.0	2.7	6.9	7727
0.3	0.1	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.4	3.1	24988
0.4	0.1	0.0	0.2	100.0	1.1	3.3	23150
0.3	0.1	0.0	0.2	100.0	0.8	3.2	24211
0.4	0.1	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.6	3.2	23928
0.3	0.1	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.7	3.4	23389
0.6	0.1	0.0	0.2	100.0	0.5	3.6	11361
0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	100.0	0.9	2.5	13389
0.3	0.1	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.3	2.5	40412
0.4	0.1	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.7	3.2	48139
<b>onflict Period</b>							
0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.5	2.0	1962
0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1	100.0	0.8	5.4	1501
1.2	0.5	0.2	0.1	100.0	2.2	8.2	1434
1.6	2.3	0.9	0.9	100.0	17.0	12.8	613
0.7	0.5	0.0	0.3	100.0	2.8	6.0	2891
0.5	0.5	0.2	0.0	100.0	2.9	5.4	2619
0.6	0.5	0.1	0.1	100.0	3.0	5.8	5241
0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.1	4.9	270
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	1.4	304
0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.5	0.8	614
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	1.8	0.0	120
0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.3	1.8	651
0.9	0.6	0.2	0.2	100.0	4.1	7.4	3071
1.3	0.9	0.0	0.2	100.0	3.6	7.1	511
0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	100.0	2.1	14.0	210
0.5	0.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	1.1	4.8	4898
0.7	0.5	0.1	0.1	100.0	2.9	5.7	5510

comparison, the governorates are recoded both for 2006 SMICS and 2018 TDHS-S data in the table under 'regions'. Both 2006 and 2018 data are recoded in regions based on their geographic locations. The recoded regions are North East Syria (Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, Al-Hasakah, Latakia and As-Suwayda).

\* The rates of orphans with both parents dead usually ranged between 0.1% and 0.3%, while the rates are slightly higher and stretched from 0.2% to 1.2% for the 2018 period.

## Educational Attainment

Armed conflicts yield multifaceted outcomes, extending beyond orphanhood and living arrangements of children to also impeding educational achievements by altering their schooling, enrollment processes and attendance dynamics. The disruptions in educational continuity, decline in school enrollment ratios and the rise in dropout percentages are some of the common consequences of conflicts. Research also points to similar results, indicating that the exposure to the conflict especially had a large and significant negative effect on both the enrollment and successful completion of mandatory schooling (Shemyakina, 2011; Akresh and de Walque, 2008). While all children bear the brunt of these adverse effects, the impact is more detrimental for orphans. The repercussions of losing one or both parents, particularly for orphans, often manifest in consequences such as discontinuing education, involvement in child labor, or exposure to discrimination. Aligned with this viewpoint, a study that analyzes nineteen DHS data across ten countries by comparing the household characteristics with and without orphans indicates a significant disparity in school enrollment between orphaned children and their non-orphan counterparts, with orphaned children exhibiting lower enrollment rates (Case et al., 2004).

Concerning Syrian children in Türkiye, the Turkish government has implemented an inclusivity program for them and has committed to integrating all school-aged Syrian refugees into the national public school system since 2017. However, low levels of enrollment in schools, the language barrier as well as the high percentage of child labor prevent children's access to education. The lack and the low command of Turkish language skills have challenged their integration into Turkish society, while the economic hardships of the parents compelled children to work instead of going to school. Based on the findings from the 2018 TDHS-S analysis, the negative impact of these challenges on education has become evident. The analysis indicates that out of the 5510 children under age eighteen, 3331 were not enrolled in education during the current school year at the time of the interview. According to the data presented in Table 4, school attendance percentages decrease by half



for both sexes in the post-conflict period, with males experiencing a more pronounced drop. The most substantial reductions are observed in the 15-17 age group, followed by the 10-14 age group. The severe decline in male school attendance is evident for both orphans and non-orphans in these age groups compared to the pre-conflict period. This shift could potentially be explained by the engagement of child or adolescent labor of the male children in these age groups. On the other hand, the most significant decrease in female school attendance percentages is noticed particularly for 15-17 age groups for both non-orphans and orphans. 15-17 age group female attendance percentage drops from 54.7% in the pre-conflict period to 25% in the post conflict period. Additionally, for orphan female children in the same age group, the attendance ratio drops from 47.7% to 34.5%. The increased proportion of girls who have been married at an early age within this age group could be associated with these declines, as it is possible that girls are compelled to discontinue their education due to early marriages.

### **Child and Adolescent Labor**

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), child labor is defined as work that “deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development” (ILO, 2004). Although there is a widespread debate on this issue and there are many forms of child labor, the general opinion disapproves of child labor finding it mentally, physically and socially dangerous and harmful to children. Current legislation in Türkiye defines ‘child worker’ and ‘adolescent worker’ separately according to their age. A child worker is described as a child who has completed the age of 14, has not completed the age of 15 and has also finished primary education; while the adolescent worker is defined as a person who has completed the age of 15, but has not completed the age of 18.

In the 2018 TDHS-S, household members who are aged 12 years and over are asked if they are working in a job that generates income. (HUIPS, 2019). Based on the findings from this question, among the 5510 children under 18 years old, 20.3% are engaged in work, whereas this percentage drops to 12.0% for children below 15 years old. According to Table 4, the proportion

of children engaged in paid employment is remarkably low in the pre-conflict period for both sexes and for both non-orphans and orphans. Nevertheless, an opposite trend is evident in the post-conflict period as these ratios increase for both males and females. There is a noticeable rise in participation in labor for males when examining the age groups of 10-14 and 15-17. Despite the absence of a discernible distinction based on the orphan status, it is evident that a substantial proportion of children in these age groups are involved either in child or adolescent labor. These findings may indicate that children with or without any parental care tend to or have to work due to the difficult living conditions. On the other hand, child labor does not manifest itself in the age groups of 0-4 and 5-9. However, the fact that some of the children in the age groups of 10-14 and 15-17 are working in the post-conflict period indicates a higher tendency of child and particularly adolescent labor in Türkiye.

### **Child and Early Marriages**

Another implication of armed conflicts on children is the heightened occurrence of early or child marriages. UNICEF defines child marriage as a union that takes place either before the age of 15 or before reaching 18 years old (UNICEF, 2022). In Syria, all the personal status laws permit child marriages and especially for girls there is no legal provision that prohibits the marriage of children. The Syrian Law of Personal Status states that the minimum legal age of marriage is 17 years for girls and 18 years for boys. However, with judicial consent, girls and boys who have reached puberty are able to marry respectively at the age of 13 and 15 years. Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, it is generally reported that child marriages have increased significantly. Studies have also found similar outcomes exhibiting a significant positive relationship between armed conflicts and girl-child marriage ratios (DiGiuseppe and Haer, 2022; Singh et al., 2022).

Ever married percentages of non-orphan and orphan Syrian boys and girls under age 18 are presented in Table 4 below. This part does not demonstrate comparable data but only presents a post-conflict analysis due to the reason that the 2006 SMICS household file does not include any variable related to marital status. According to the data from the 2018 TDHS-S, orphan

Syrian children began marrying at the age of 15 and ever-married children are more commonly encountered in the 10-14 and 15-17 age groups with being higher in the latter group. In line with the findings of Table 4, the total percentage of ever-married children is 0.6% for males and 10.1% for females in the post-conflict period in Türkiye. Among all children, the ever-married percentages of females surpass those of males, conversely, orphaned female children display a higher percentage than their non-orphan peers in all age groups. This may indicate that female orphans who have lost one or more parents are more inclined to marry at early ages compared to the males as an indirect effect of the conflict.

**Table 4. Percent Distribution of Syrian Non-Orphan and Orphan Children under Age 18 who Attends School, Works in Paid Job and Ever Married According to Age and Sex in Pre-Conflict Period in Syria and Post-Conflict Period in Türkiye, 2006 SMICS and 2018 TDHS-S**

	Age	Male				Female			
		Attending School	Working In Paid Job	Ever Married	Number of Children	Attending School	Working In Paid Job	Ever Married	Number of Children
<b>Pre-Conflict Period</b>									
<b>Non-Orphans</b>	0-4	0.0	0.0	-	5818	0.0	0.0	-	5218
	5-9	99.3	0.2	-	7386	99.0	0.1	-	6879
<b>Orphans</b>	10-14	90.1	4.6	-	7120	88.9	1.1	-	6948
	15-17	52.6	0.0	-	3873	54.7	0.0	-	3295
<b>Orphans</b>	0-4	(0.0)	(0.0)	-	(32)	(0.0)	(0.0)	-	(34)
	5-9	100.0	0.7	-	153	97.5	0.0	-	151
	10-14	84.9	5.1	-	313	82.3	2.1	-	327
	15-17	45.3	0.0	-	270	47.7	0.0	-	262
<b>Total</b>		83.8	2.4	-	24964	84.4	0.6	-	23112
<b>Post-Conflict Period</b>									
<b>Non-Orphans</b>	0-4	1.8	0.0	0.0	1028	1.7	0.0	0.0	891
	5-9	71.2	0.0	0.0	718	67.1	0.0	0.0	692
<b>Orphans</b>	10-14	65.8	18.0	0.3	650	71.0	5.2	1.2	656
	15-17	16.0	49.3	0.8	306	25.0	8.1	22.4	221

	0-4	(0.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(21)	(2.1)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(17)
<b>Orphans</b>	5-9	(81.7)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(42)	77.6	(0.0)	(0.0)	(39)
	10-14	60.5	29.8	1.0	59	66.2	6.6	3.3	58
	15-17	20.6	38.2	2.1	51	(34.5)	(11.9)	(40.3)	(27)
<b>Total</b>		37.8	32.3	0.6	2891	41.5	6.4	10.1	2619

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicates that a figure is based on 0-49 weighted cases.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the statistical evidence provided, several key findings overlap with the existing literature that is provided. As a consequence of the destructiveness of the armed conflicts, the increase in the number of deaths manifests its effect especially in the form of adult male mortality as men are the main combatants in military operations. In the post-conflict period in Türkiye, this can be observed in the orphanhood types of children in which paternal orphanhood is the highest among others. The percentage of children who live with the mother although the father is alive is also high in the post-conflict period indicating a possible family separation during the conflict.

Living arrangements of orphan children differ according to orphanhood status. Among the single orphans in the post-conflict period, the general trend is to live with the surviving biological parent as in line with the literature. %82.4 of the maternal orphans and %89.6 of the paternal orphans under age 18 are living with their biological parents. The percentage not living with a biological parent is generally high for the 15-17 age group, for children who live in non-camp areas and whose place of birth is Syria. If the child is a double orphan, the living arrangement is either to live with related adults in the remaining family or with unrelated adults which the latter is higher contrary to the literature. The tendency of older orphans to live independently can be observed in the post-conflict period, especially for children in the 15-17 age group. As the age increases, the number of children who do not live with their biological parents also increases reaching a peak of 17% in this age group. However, as the findings suggest, the phenomenon of child-headed households is uncommon and not observed for Syrian children living in Türkiye. At least

one or more adults are living with the orphans in the households, but the cases in which unrelated adults are living with the orphans are especially high for the paternal orphanhood.

The disruptive effects and profound repercussions of armed conflicts on children extend to critical areas such as educational attainment, child labor and early marriages in the post-conflict period. Evidently, the analysis underscores a noticeable decline in school attendance ratios in the post-conflict period, affecting both male and female non-orphan and orphan children, thereby revealing the adverse influence of armed conflicts on all children. For orphaned children, the issue is exacerbated as male school attendance lags behind that of females during this period. A study by Kırdar et al. (2021) aligns with these findings, illustrating a comparable decrease in school enrollment ratios among Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, with boys experiencing a drop of half and girls two-thirds. Our own analysis closely mirrors this pattern, with a near-twofold reduction in attendance for both genders, but with boys disproportionately affected. Additionally, the detrimental aftermath of conflict is evident in the rise of child and adolescent labor, particularly pronounced in the post-conflict phase. The dire economic conditions faced by many Syrian refugees in Türkiye likely compel male children to abandon their education and engage in labor to contribute to their families' sustenance. This situation aligns with another study that highlights a significant prevalence of paid employment among Syrian refugee boys in the 15-17 age group, with a reported percentage of 48% (Dayıoğlu et al., 2023). This trend is observed in our analysis as well with 49.3% in the 15-17 age group for non-orphans, but additionally, the high proportion of working orphan boys is also apparent in the age groups of 10-14 (29.8%) and 15-17 (38.2%).

The last impact of the armed conflicts on children is also starkly evident in the prevalence of early marriages, predominantly affecting girls. Our post-conflict analysis produces similar results in parallel with the literature. Among all children who are over 12 and under 18 years old, 4.5% of them are married in the post-conflict period and while this percentage is 0.6% for males, it is 10.1% for females. The burden of orphanhood is evident specifically for orphan girls

with 40.3% of them married in the 15-17 age group. The absence of a parent in the household probably contributes to this unsettling trend, leaving these vulnerable children susceptible to coerced or early marriages.

The results of the study raise some important policy priorities regarding Syrian children living under temporary protection in Türkiye. The first of these priorities is the prevalence of orphanhood which has increased significantly compared to the pre-conflict period. The fact that 6 out of every 100 Syrian children living in Türkiye are orphans draws attention to the lack of socio-psychological support for these children, as well as pointing to the magnitude of conflict and conflict-induced migration. The fact that orphanhood reaches up to 13% at older ages indicates the seriousness of the issue. The results of the study show that 15 out of every 100 Syrian children live in a dissolved family (single-parent or other forms of dissolved families) which can be marked as an area where policies should be prioritized. Another policy priority area is the high percentage of child labor among Syrian orphan boys and low school attendance percentages among Syrian orphan girls and boys. Related to these issues, the notable prevalence of child marriages particularly among Syrian paternal orphan girls emerges as an area that should be given policy attention.

In light of the substantial empirical insights provided, it is imperative to establish a comprehensive policy framework that prioritizes the well-being and future prospects of children impacted by armed conflicts. Addressing the educational challenges highlighted in the analysis necessitates immediate attention to counteract the declining school attendance ratios of Syrian children who are destined to become a lost generation, especially orphaned children, through targeted education initiatives that ensure equitable access and quality learning environments. Concurrently, combating child and adolescent labor demands proactive measures to alleviate economic vulnerabilities and provide viable alternatives for vulnerable children, thus enabling their development. Moreover, to curtail the alarming prevalence of early marriages among girls, comprehensive awareness measures aimed at fostering gender equality, empowering girls through education, and addressing societal norms are imperative.

In conclusion, these policy priorities collectively reflect a steadfast commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of conflict-affected children, fostering their resilience and ensuring their potential to thrive despite adversities. It is of great importance that all of these policy priorities are implemented on the basis of the principle of “superior benefit of the child”.



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