



The Role of University-Ngo Cooperation in Increasing the Entrepreneurial Skills of Youth: An Evaluation Specific to Refugee Youth

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Abstract

As widely recognized, Turkey is hosting the world's highest number of registered refugees since 2011. Notably, 20% of this refugee population comprises young individuals aged 18-29, highlighting significant youth. Gaziantep, second to Istanbul in refugee concentration, accommodates over 440,000 refugees.

This study delves into the necessity of forging a new symbiotic relationship between residents and migrants. Such a partnership can positively affect industry, productivity and human resource diversity. Notably, research indicates that a majority (80%) of refugees do not foresee a return to Syria, underscoring the significance of maximizing the productivity and efficiency of these individuals in their adopted regions. Consequently, the study investigates the interplay between young migrants and the city's entrepreneurship ecosystem, drawing upon data from 14 collaborative projects, focusing on enhancing local and refugee youth's capacity and entrepreneurial skills, between Gaziantep University and NGOs.

The findings underscore the outcomes stemming from the alliance between young refugees and their local counterparts, which fosters innovation and productivity through collaboration. This study illuminates the potential for new ecosystems to drive entrepreneurial effectiveness and efficiency, culminating in innovation-driven accomplishments facilitated by the collaboration between refugee and local youth.

Keywords: Refugee, youth, productivity, partnerships, ecosystems, entrepreneurship

Jel Codes: A13, A14, B55, D02, D60, O15, O31, O35, O43, P46, R11, R23

Gençlerin Girişimcilik Becerilerinin Artırılmasında Üniversite-STK İşbirliğinin Rolü: Mülteci Gençler Üzerinde Bir Değerlendirme

Özet

Bilindiği üzere Türkiye, 2011 yılından bu yana dünyanın en yüksek sayıda kayıtlı mültecisine ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Bu mülteci nüfusunun %20'sinin 18-29 yaş arası genç bireylerden oluşması, genç nüfusun önemine işaret etmektedir. Mülteci yoğunluğu bakımından İstanbul'dan sonra ikinci sırada yer alan Gaziantep, 440.000'den fazla mülteciye ev sahipliği yapmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, ev sahibi toplum ile göçmenler arasında yeni bir simbiyotik ilişki kurulmasının gerekliliğini incelemektedir. Böyle bir ortaklık sanayi, üretkenlik ve insan kaynağı çeşitliliğini olumlu yönde etkileyebilecektir. Özellikle araştırmalar, mültecilerin çoğunluğunun (%80) Suriye'ye geri dönmeyi öngörmediğini göstermektedir ve bu bireylerin buldukları bölgelerde üretkenlik ve verimliliklerini en üst düzeye çıkarmanın önemini altını çizmektedir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Gaziantep Üniversitesi ve STK'lar arasında yerel ve mülteci gençlerin kapasitelerini ve girişimcilik becerilerini geliştirmeye odaklanan 14 ortak projeden elde edilen verilerden yararlanarak genç göçmenler ve şehrin girişimcilik ekosistemi arasındaki etkileşimi araştırmaktadır.

Bulgular, genç mülteciler ile yerel meslektaşları arasındaki işbirliğinden kaynaklanan ve bu işbirliği yoluyla yenilikçiliği ve üretkenliği teşvik eden sonuçların altını çizmektedir. Bu çalışma, mülteci ve yerel gençlik arasındaki işbirliğinin kolaylaştırdığı inovasyon odaklı başarılarla sonuçlanan, girişimcilik etkinliğini ve verimliliğini artıracak yeni ekosistemlerin potansiyelini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mültecileri, gençlik, verimlilik, girişimcilik, işbirlikleri

Jel Kodu: A13, A14, B55, D02, D60, O15, O31, O35, O43, P46, R11, R23

CITE (APA): İncetahtacı, N. (2024). The Role of University-Ngo Cooperation in Increasing the Entrepreneurial Skills of Youth: An Evaluation Specific to Refugee Youth. *İzmir İktisat Dergisi*. 39(2). 507-523. Doi: 10.24988/ije.1362448

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1. INTRODUCTION

Turkey has been significantly affected by the ongoing global refugee crisis, mainly due to the civil war in neighboring Syria (Erdoğan, 2015). As a result, the country has become a central host to millions of refugees, including a significant number of youth who have been forced to flee their homes and seek safety and opportunities in Turkey. Providing education and skill-building opportunities for these young refugees has become critical to their integration and long-term well-being. According to the Council of Higher Education in Turkey (YÖK), the total number of registered Syrian students in HEIs are 58.213, including VET and Bachelor's degree². It is seen that this number has increased over the years. The increase in this number over the years is one of the indicators of the increase in awareness of education issues and the healthy progress of the adaptation process.

Studies reveal that successful engagement in education is not the sole determinant of harmony and integration³. Economic engagement and economic integration are crucial to cohesion in the community. Therefore, since the beginning of the revolution, NGOs, together with institutions such as universities, chambers of commerce, etc., have organized several activities and designed projects to increase youth skills to facilitate their employment, productivity, or entrepreneurial skills.

Economic engagement and integration are pivotal in fostering social cohesion within communities. Beyond academic accomplishments, economic opportunities provide individuals with avenues to contribute meaningfully to the broader societal fabric. A robust economy empowers individuals to secure gainful employment and encourages cross-cultural interactions and mutual support, enriching the overall social landscape. The intricate interplay between educational attainment and economic prospects underscores the multifaceted nature of integration, where both elements synergistically contribute to realizing harmonious societies.

As such, the holistic approach to integration, which intertwines educational, economic, and societal dimensions, paints a comprehensive picture of the collective efforts undertaken to foster inclusive and thriving communities. The confluence of education, economic engagement, and supportive structures is a testament to various stakeholders' commitment to steering societies toward cohesion, progress, and a shared sense of purpose. This synergy is exemplified in increasing productivity and economic self-sufficiency among refugees through acquiring entrepreneurial skills. As refugees harness their potential to initiate and manage businesses, they contribute to their own well-being and forge connections that transcend cultural boundaries. This holistic endeavor towards integration encompasses nurturing innovation, promoting interdependence, and cultivating a harmonious social fabric, encapsulating the collaborative journey towards resilient and dynamic societies.

The lack of comprehensive understanding and empirical analysis regarding the efficacy of university-NGO cooperation in enhancing youth productivity for fostering innovation, particularly within the context of refugee youth, presents a critical gap in the current research landscape. This study addresses this gap by investigating how collaborative efforts between universities and NGOs enhance productivity among refugee youth, specifically in the context of innovation for productivity and socioeconomic integration. Additionally, it embarks on an exploration of the pivotal role that university-NGO collaborations play in augmenting the innovation productivity of youth, with a particular focus on refugee youth. The study's trajectory revolves around the synergy and networking inherent in innovation productivity and partnerships between young refugees and local youth, giving rise to thriving ecosystems. By unveiling the potential latent within the collaboration of

² <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

³ <https://euc.yasar.edu.tr/2022/11/10/gamification-as-a-tool-of-inclusion-entrepreneurship-for-young-refugees-migrants-get-included/>

these two groups and harnessing the support of universities and NGOs, this study pioneers a comprehensive avenue for enhancing innovation and productivity.

1.1 Refugees' Productivity and Innovation Potential

The influence of refugees on development is intricate and multifaceted. While refugees present challenges, they offer substantial advantages, contributing to economic growth, cultural enrichment, and social cohesion.

Refugees can significantly shape the economic and social landscape of their communities. Although refugees may initially require governmental and civil society support to meet their basic needs, they possess the potential to invigorate local economies and cultural diversity. Their adeptness, knowledge, and entrepreneurial zeal can catalyze the revitalization of regional financial dynamics. Notably, many refugees are highly educated and skilled professionals capable of mitigating labor shortages in vital sectors such as healthcare, engineering, and technology. Furthermore, refugees initiate enterprises, generating employment opportunities and bolstering local tax revenue. This underscores the substantial prospect for refugees to drive productivity and foster innovation.

Furthermore, universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) assume integral roles in augmenting the innovation and productivity of young refugees. Collaboration, networking, and forging partnerships with local youth constitute compelling avenues for cultivating ecosystems of innovation and creative potential. It is paramount to acknowledge that refugees' contributions to the local economy and society hinge on various factors, including access to education, training, employment prospects, and the support afforded by governmental and civil society entities.

Refugees are instrumental in fortifying the local economy by initiating businesses, bridging labor gaps in critical sectors such as technology, and fulfilling their tax obligations. In the United States, refugees display a higher propensity for entrepreneurship than the general population, and their enterprises generate employment opportunities and stimulate economic expansion. Importantly, refugees infuse cities with cultural diversity, enriching the social fabric of urban landscapes. This infusion engenders heightened tolerance, mutual understanding, and enhanced social coherence among diverse communities. Moreover, refugees introduce novel perspectives and ideas to cities, nurturing an environment conducive to innovation and creativity. For example, refugees who have encountered conflict or displacement often possess unique insights into conflict resolution, which can be applied across various contexts.

1.2 Potential of Young Refugees for Innovation, Opportunities, and Cooperation with Local Youth

Young refugees bring diverse skills and potential, encompassing multilingualism, cultural richness, entrepreneurial insight, business development expertise, and a propensity for collaboration. Their proficiency in multiple languages can prove invaluable for businesses with international operations or those serving a diverse clientele. They can construct robust business networks by leveraging their pre-existing connections with individuals and enterprises across different nations. These refugees often offer distinct perspectives and life experiences that empower businesses to better comprehend and cater to their multifaceted customer base. Drawing from their prior experience in launching and managing businesses in their home countries, they can infuse local economies with their accrued wisdom. Introducing novel skills and viewpoints to enterprises significantly enhances the local workforce.

Furthermore, their distinctive ideas and unconventional business strategies can invigorate innovation and stimulate growth within local economies. Thus, young refugees wield considerable potential to contribute substantively to local businesses, while communities can reap the rewards of their competencies, experience, and diverse viewpoints. Collaboration between these young refugees

and local youth harbors the promise of unleashing a formidable force for productivity, entrepreneurship, innovation, and marketing.

As the global community grapples with the complexities of unexpected refugee migration, numerous countries are embracing young refugees in search of security and improved livelihoods. Integrating these young refugees can yield manifold benefits for the local economy. Their potential as a resourceful labor pool is particularly promising. Eager and enterprising, they exhibit an unwavering commitment to hard work and self-sufficiency. Young refugees rejuvenate fiscal vigor and enhance community value by channeling their efforts into the local economy.

Moreover, their contributions can help mitigate skill shortages in sectors such as healthcare and construction. The initiative of young refugees extends to establishing local enterprises, which generate job opportunities for local residents. These individuals frequently exhibit entrepreneurial flair and can augment the local economic foundation through the inception of small-scale businesses. For instance, a young refugee might possess the skills and determination to initiate a catering venture or a micro-manufacturing enterprise, thus augmenting the local economic landscape. By supporting these fledgling businesses by fostering an environment conducive to entrepreneurship, local authorities can bolster the prospects of young refugees. Integrating these individuals into local events and social life further enriches community dynamics. Their contributions, including diversity, creative innovation, and novel ideas, catalyze local economic growth. Cultural events orchestrated by young refugees provide a platform for highlighting their distinctive abilities and traditions, nurturing community bonds, and fostering social cohesion.

1.3 Role of Universities and NGOs in Enhancing the Productivity of Young Refugees

The involvement of universities and NGOs is pivotal in nurturing the productivity and triumph of young refugees, cementing their path to prosperity. Moreover, these entities provide a fertile ground for fostering collaboration between refugee and local youth, facilitating cross-cultural synergy and shared growth.

Extensive literature delves into the role of NGOs in cultivating innovation capacity, the dynamics of university-industry partnerships, the impact of academic faculty on technology transfer, and the intricate interplay of universities within the innovation ecosystem (Bozeman & Boardman, 2014; Brink & Brink, 2010; Brouwer, Kleinknecht & Reijnen, 1993; D'Este & Patel, 2007; Gao & Newman, 2013; Huang & Wu, 2013; Huggins & Johnston, 2010; Kocakulah, 2018).

As educational powerhouses, universities offer a gamut of opportunities for young refugees to amass knowledge and cultivate essential skills for workforce triumph. This includes immersive language courses, vocational training, technical mentorship, and comprehensive higher education programs.

Furthermore, universities function as conduits for young refugees to immerse themselves in their local communities, enabling them to forge invaluable networks that pave the way to employment and varied prospects. For instance, initiatives that facilitate connections between students, local businesses, and mentors extend bridges of opportunity. In Lebanon, the "University for Refugees" initiative at the American University of Beirut (AUB) exemplifies this commitment by providing educational pathways for Syrian refugees.

Simultaneously, NGOs play a pivotal role (Sunata ve Tosun, 2018) by providing targeted job training and skills development workshops that prepare young refugees for the competitive job market. This equips refugees with a pathway to financial stability, a catalyst for enhanced productivity across diverse spheres of life. The University of Gaziantep in Turkey extends various comprehensive educational and training programs.

Encompassing a broader perspective, various organizations champion programs and initiatives tailored to foster entrepreneurial prowess among young refugees and locals. For instance, the US Entrepreneurship Program for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (EPRA) facilitates technical support and training to bolster the establishment and growth of refugee-owned businesses. Complementary efforts, such as those of the Refugee Investment Network (RIN) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), introduce initiatives that provide refugees with avenues to access investment capital and credit facilities.

Equally crucial, NGOs wield a distinct influence in advocating for refugees within governmental and organizational spheres. Their role extends to securing protection, recognition, and support for refugees from governments, thereby amplifying their potential for success. Additionally, NGOs serve as navigators, guiding refugees through bureaucratic intricacies to access public services and other fundamental rights.

Universities and NGOs find synergy in the pursuit of creating specialized job training and placement programs tailor-made for young refugees. These comprehensive initiatives not only equip refugees with the essential skills and experiences necessary for professional triumph but also act as bridges, connecting them with potential employers and a trove of invaluable resources.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this article involves a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative interviews with university and NGO representatives and refugee youth participants provide rich insights into the nuances of their experiences and perspectives within the context of university-NGO cooperation and its impact on innovation productivity. Supplementing qualitative insights with quantitative data to measure changes in productivity and innovation indicators before and after participation in university-NGO programs adds a quantitative dimension to this study. This approach can help establish a more robust understanding of these collaborative initiatives' actual effects and outcomes. By combining qualitative interviews and quantitative data, this study will capture the qualitative depth and quantitative evidence needed to support a well-rounded evaluation of the role of university-NGO cooperation in enhancing innovation productivity among refugee youth. Qualitative data can provide context and rich descriptions that help explain the patterns or trends identified through quantitative analysis. Statistical results might indicate a change in productivity scores, but qualitative interviews will offer insights into why such changes occurred or the factors influencing the outcomes.

2.1 Data Source

In this study, an analysis was conducted on startup and entrepreneurship projects specifically designed to enhance the innovation-driven productivity of refugee youth. The focus was on fourteen projects in a refugee shelter region in Gaziantep, Turkey. These projects were meticulously examined, emphasizing their relevance to augmenting the productivity of young individuals for innovation, fostering startup initiatives, and cultivating entrepreneurial skills, all tailored to the context of refugee youth. Among the fourteen projects, seven operated independently, while the remaining seven were replicated iterations. The analysis primarily centered on the latter seven projects, chosen to delve into the underlying factors contributing to their success.

Project data has been sourced from reputable entities, including the Gaziantep Technology Development Zone (Technopark) at the University of Gaziantep, the Technology Transfer Office of the University of Gaziantep, and the Gaziantep Industrial Design and Hybrid Modeling Center of the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce. These initiatives received funding from diverse stakeholders, encompassing NGOs, universities, and esteemed public organizations such as the United Nations (UN), The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for

Migration (IOM), SPARK, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), International Labor Organization (ILO), Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD). A concise overview of the projects under examination is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Productivity and innovation projects for young refugees and local youth

Number of Projects	The objective/concept of the project
Project 1	Technology and innovation-based program for training youth refugees and local youth entrepreneurship
Project 2	Acceleration of entrepreneurship for youth refugees and local youth
Project 3	Startup Acceleration Program. Supporting Turkish and Syrian youth startups that will create employment
Project 4	Supporting the Acceleration of the Rehabilitation Process of the Local Population after the War. It is aimed to provide basic training for Syrian university students to take active roles in the locations in Syria where they will return after the war.
Project 5	Syrian Students Scholarship Project. It is aimed to pay the higher education contributions of Syrian students during their university education to strengthen their integration while continuing their university education with social living expense support.
Project 6	Enhancer Development of Infrastructure, Institutionalization, and Globalization in Gaziantep Technopark Common Use and Workspace Project
Project 7	Gaziantep Technopark Capital Support Program for Innovative and Technological Entrepreneurs. The project aims to fund technology-based entrepreneurs and contribute to their growth and commercialization.
Project 8-1 Project 8-2 Project 8-3 Project 8-4 Project 8-5 Project 8-6 Project 8-7	Startup Accelerating Programs. Developing the region's startup ecosystem and ensuring the creation of value-added initiatives, creating qualified brands and employment. Within the project's scope, equal participation of refugees and local youth in the program was ensured. The program seven times were replicated.

2.2 Descriptive Case Study with Key Informant Interviews (KII)

The current study employed a descriptive case study model, which included qualitative interviews with key informants. Key informant interviews served as an additional method for data collection in this study. As the researcher aimed to understand the beliefs and attitudes held by insiders from the labor market regarding the social cohesion of Syrian refugee youth, in-depth perspectives were sought from key informants. These informants are 'knowledgeable individuals who contribute a unique perspective on a research phenomenon' (Cossham & Johanson, 2019:15), which researchers in this study might not fully possess.

Regarding participant selection, key informants were chosen based on specific sampling criteria. These criteria aimed to include individuals with extensive experience in employing Syrian graduates. For the group discussion sessions, graduates were selected based on their nationality and invited to participate in the study.

The second sampling approach employed was snowball sampling. This method involves researchers contacting participants using contact information provided by other informants. Participants recruited through criterion sampling were asked to refer individuals with similar characteristics, expanding the participant pool. A detailed overview of the participants can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Statistical information on the participants

Date	Acti vity	Group	Number	Female	Male	Age
10.01.2023	KII1	Entrepreneur	1	--	1	1 (25-29)
10.01.2023	KII2	Chamber of Industry	1	-	1	1 (25-29)
11.01.2023	KII3	Gaziantep University	1	--	1	1 (>30)
15.01.2023	KII4	Chamber of Commerce	1	1	-	1 (>30)
15.01.2023	KII5	NGO	1	1	-	1 (>30)
18.01.2023	KII6	Entrepreneur	1	-	1	1 (>30)
20.01.2023	KII7	NGO	1	-	1	1 (>30)
20.01.2023	KII8	Entrepreneur	1	1	-	1 (25-29)

2.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collection procedure commenced after recruiting participants for various research activities, including Key Informant Interviews (KII). A comprehensive schedule of activities and participant appointments was finalized, and data collection began with a KII session on 05/01/2023. All KII sessions were conducted on the dates specified in Table 2. Before each activity, written consent was obtained from every participant. The KII sessions were audio recorded, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim following each session.

The data analysis process was initiated after the completion of the interview phase. The researcher employed thematic content analysis to analyze the data gathered from key informants. Thematic content analysis is a robust method used to extract and portray the thematic content of interview transcripts (or other textual data) by identifying recurring themes within the analyzed texts (Anderson, 2014).

The qualitative data from interviews and the quantitative data from statistics combined provide a comprehensive understanding of the research and enhanced explanation.

2.4 Some insights on the Productivity and Innovation Projects

In 14 projects analyzed, it was found that there was a significant relationship between the aims and objectives of the projects. All of the projects aim to enable young refugees and local youth to become entrepreneurs. Providing some basic training required for entrepreneurship (finance, accounting, company establishment, production, innovation, marketing, business management, etc.) has been seen to be the main activity. In addition to the training, mentoring services were also provided, and the mentors had previous entrepreneurship knowledge and training.

Project 1: The project's objective was to develop a technology and innovation-based program for training youth refugees and local youth to increase the number of entrepreneurs. In the project, 100 groups were formed and trained in basic entrepreneurship. The main aim was to establish an innovative business model by establishing a company for refugees and/or Turkish youth individually or together. The methodology was basic entrepreneurship training, mentor supervision, and advanced entrepreneurship training.

Project 2: The project's objective was the acceleration of entrepreneurship for youth refugees and local youth. The project objective was also to support Turkish and Syrian youth to participate in the Techno-Entrepreneurship Capital Program of TÜBİTAK for their initiatives that will create employment. The expected outputs were to establish an innovative business model by establishing a company for refugees and/or Turkish youth individually or together. The basic methodology was basic entrepreneurship training, mentor supervising, advanced entrepreneurship training, and directed to advanced project systems (e.g., TÜBİTAK).

Project 3: The objective was to establish startup acceleration entrepreneurship by supporting Turkish and Syrian (refugees) youth startups that will create employment. The expected outputs were to establish an innovative business model by establishing a company for refugees and/or Turkish youth individually or together. The expected outputs were to establish an innovative business model by establishing a company for refugees and/or Turkish youth individually or together. The methodology was basic entrepreneurship training, mentor supervision, and advanced entrepreneurship training.

Project 4: The project's objective was to support the acceleration of the rehabilitation process of the local population after the Syrian War. It is aimed to provide basic training for Syrian university students to take active roles in the locations in Syria where they will return after the war. The expected outputs were to take active roles in youth refugees. The refugees would take these roles in Syria. The basic methodology was basic training.

Project 5: This project was a refugee student's scholarship project. It aimed to pay refugee students' higher education contributions during their university education to strengthen their integration while continuing their university education with social living expense support. This project was simply focused on the education of university-age refugees. This project aimed to train more educated refugees (at least university graduates). There was no branch limitation in this education part. The methodology was a regular higher education.

Project 6: The project's objective was to enhance infrastructure development, institutionalization, and globalization in Gaziantep Technopark's everyday use and workspace. The project aimed to support entrepreneurs with technology-based business ideas through various trainings and mentorships and to commercialize their products. The expected outputs were to establish an innovative business model by establishing a company for refugees and/or Turkish youth individually or together. The methodology was basic entrepreneurship training, mentor supervision, and advanced entrepreneurship training.

Project 7: The project's objective was Gaziantep Technopark, with a capital support program for innovative and technological entrepreneurs. The project aimed to support technology-based entrepreneurs with funding and contribute to their growth and commercialization. The project aims to commercialize and grow entrepreneurs with technology-based business ideas with the support of startup and overhead costs, machinery and equipment funding, and business development support. The project was very creative and the first project about this object. The expected outputs were to establish an innovative business model by establishing a company for refugees and/or Turkish youth individually or together. The basic methodology was establishing the company.

Project 8 (1-7): The project was an accelerating startup program. Developing the region's startup ecosystem and ensuring the creation of value-added initiatives, creating qualified brands and employment. Within the project's scope, equal participation of refugees and local youth in the program was ensured. The program seven times were replicated.

2.4.1 The effect of project outputs on productivity and business establishment, the number of project beneficiaries, and the success rate

Project Outcomes:

Project 1: Following the project's implementation, 100 groups (comprising 50% youth refugees and 50% local youth) underwent basic entrepreneurship training. Among them, 40 groups received advanced entrepreneurship training through mentoring, and an additional ten groups benefited from prototyping support. This initiative established one company within Gaziantep Technopark, resulting in a 1% success rate for startups.

Project 2: The impact was evident as 100 groups (50% youth refugees and 50% local youth) engaged in basic entrepreneurship training, while 40 groups advanced their skills through mentoring. Moreover, creating a comprehensive data pool contributed to the entrepreneurship ecosystem. Notably, ten groups were guided to participate in TÜBİTAK's 1512 call, establishing two successful companies. The overall success rate for startups stood at 2%.

Project 3: This initiative yielded training for 25 groups in basic entrepreneurship, and ten groups benefited from mentoring for advanced entrepreneurship. Without company establishment, creating a data pool enhances the entrepreneurship ecosystem. Unfortunately, the success rate for startups remained at 0%.

Project 4: With an emphasis on foundational skills, this project trained 50 participants who underwent comprehensive examinations to validate their acquired abilities. Impressively, all 50 individuals demonstrated successful completion of the training. Although company establishment was not the project's focus, it aligned with its conceptual framework.

Project 5: Targeting the integration of refugee students, this project supported 2000 individuals throughout their university education. The initiative bolstered integration by defraying higher education costs and providing social living expense support. While company establishment was not within this project's scope, participants were equipped to pursue business endeavors in the future.

Project 6: A total of 200 applications were submitted for technology-based business ideas within this project. Ultimately, 18 of these ideas flourished, resulting in the successful establishment of the company. Notably, the success rate for startups reached 9%.

Project 7: This venture received 80 applications for technology-based business ideas, culminating in the establishing of 16 new entrepreneurial companies. Moreover, five companies secured business development, machinery, and equipment support. The initiative achieved a commendable success rate for startups at 20%.

Project 8: Over six years, this project was replicated seven times, each iteration maintaining the same core concept. The cumulative results highlighted the involvement of 780 entrepreneurs (comprising 481 local youth and 299 youth refugees) in vocational and technical training. An additional 268 participants (155 local youth and 113 youth refugees) engaged in webinar events, while 97 entrepreneurs (45 local youth and 52 youth refugees) benefited from mentoring and counseling. Notably, six trademark registrations were secured, with two trademark registration applications pending. Moreover, the initiative facilitated five TÜBİTAK projects and established 20 open companies. Furthermore, 46 SMEs (23 local youth and 23 youth refugees) received mentoring and

consultancy. For a comprehensive overview of the entrepreneurship sectors impacted by these projects, please refer to Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of entrepreneurship sectors

	Local	Refugee	Total
Robotic-Audio-IOT	5	2	7
Industrial Design	6	2	8
Software programming	5	4	9
E-Trading	3	5	8
Home Technology	0	2	2
Renewable energy	0	2	2
Automobile	3	1	4
Construction technology	1	2	3
Agriculture and animal husbandry	2	4	6
Healthy Sector	3	3	6
Rehabilitation	1	1	2
Medical Sector	0	3	3
Urban architecture	2	2	4
Jewelry design	1	0	1
Service	1	6	7
Food	0	2	2
Textile	0	1	1
Shoe design and production	3	1	4

3. FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSES OF THE PROJECTS

The insights from the projects provided align closely with the themes and focus of the study on university-NGO cooperation and enhancing innovation productivity among refugee youth. The projects described provide practical examples of how collaboration between universities, NGOs, and young refugees is being implemented to achieve the aim of the study.

The projects consistently align objectives with your article's focus on productivity and innovation among refugee youth. All projects aim to empower young refugees and local youth to become entrepreneurs through various training and mentoring activities. The methodologies employed in the projects, such as basic entrepreneurship training and mentorship, echo the approach suggested in your article's methodology. These training programs are vital in enhancing innovation productivity among refugee youth. The projects' emphasis on establishing innovative business models and companies for refugee and Turkish youth is in line with fostering innovation. This approach supports your article's exploration of university-NGO cooperation in enhancing innovation potential. Several projects focus on technology-based entrepreneurship, which resonates with your article's context of innovation. This alignment highlights how collaboration between universities, NGOs, and youth can advance technology-driven initiatives. Projects that support integration, education, and employment opportunities for refugee youth correspond to the socioeconomic integration aspect emphasized in your article. These initiatives contribute to the overarching goal of enhancing productivity and innovation. Including refugees and local youth in the programs highlights a collaborative approach, reflecting the spirit of university-NGO cooperation. This aligns with an emphasis on collaborative efforts for innovation. The replication of programs (as seen in Project 8) highlights the potential for scalability and sustainability, concepts that are relevant to the impact and implications.

In analyzing fourteen distinct projects, a notable correlation emerged between project aims and objectives. Each of these initiatives shared a common objective: to empower young refugees and local youth by nurturing entrepreneurial capacities and innovation for productivity. Central to this objective was foundational training in key entrepreneurial domains, including finance, accounting, company establishment, production, innovation, marketing, and business management. Experienced individuals with prior entrepreneurship knowledge facilitated this foundational training, accompanied by mentorship services.

For instance, in Project 1, the endeavor focused on cultivating a technology and innovation-based program to equip youth refugees and local youth with entrepreneurial acumen. Through the formation and training of one hundred groups, participants underwent fundamental entrepreneurship instruction. The ultimate aspiration was to establish an innovative business model through individual or collaborative initiatives involving refugee and/or local youth. This approach integrated basic entrepreneurship training, mentor oversight, and advanced instruction.

Likewise, Project 2 sought to expedite entrepreneurship among youth refugees and local counterparts. Additionally, the initiative aimed to assist Turkish and Syrian youth in their involvement with the Techno-Entrepreneurship Capital Program of TÜBİTAK, thereby facilitating employment-generating endeavors. Akin to other projects, the desired outcome entailed the creation of innovative business models for productivity, underscored by comprehensive entrepreneurship training, mentorship, advanced skill development, and directed engagement with advanced project systems such as TÜBİTAK.

Project 3 pursued establishing startup acceleration entrepreneurship, supporting Turkish and Syrian (refugee) youth startups for employment generation. Mirroring the overarching theme, the project's central thrust was cultivating inventive business models, incorporating vital entrepreneurship training, mentorship, and advanced skill enhancement.

Beyond entrepreneurship, Project 4 engaged a different facet, focusing on post-Syrian War rehabilitation efforts for the local populace. Targeted towards Syrian university students, the initiative aimed to furnish basic training to facilitate their active roles in post-war Syria. This project typifies the diversity of endeavors undertaken to empower youth refugees with a methodology rooted in fundamental training.

Moreover, Project 5 concentrated exclusively on scholarship provision for refugee students pursuing higher education. The project's goal encompassed funding the higher education expenses of refugee students while concurrently bolstering their integration by facilitating social living expenses. This distinct approach was geared toward nurturing a more educated refugee population, aligning with broader aspirations for educational advancement.

The projects' diverse nature collectively echoed the overarching objective of fostering entrepreneurship, innovation, and socioeconomic integration among refugee youth. Beyond training, mentorship, and innovative business models, these initiatives underscore university-NGO cooperation's profound impact in enhancing productivity and innovation within this demographic. These real-world endeavors validate theoretical frameworks and illuminate the tangible pathways collaboration can pave toward empowerment and sustainable development.

3.1 Findings from the KIIs⁴

This section elucidates the connections between the significance of productivity and innovation projects and legal considerations, encompassing their legal statuses, integration, and associated expectations. Quotations from the interviews were used to illuminate and support these

⁴ Because of special limitations on the study, only a critical summary of findings is presented.

relationships. The thematic content analysis revealed some striking themes regarding the cultural background of refugee youth and its effect on their transition to the labor market as either entrepreneurs or employees.

3.1.1 Why pursue productivity and innovation projects?

The excerpts from the interviews are given in the Table 4.

Table 4: Theme Excerpt Table

Theme	Excerpt
Legal Issues	<i>"For me, because of my situation, I mean most of the institutions will not..., it is not an easy procedure to get employed, they would accept the ones that have citizenship rather than the foreigners. It is rather... it takes a long time. It costs money, and it's a really complicated procedure to become a Turkish citizen; a protocol that works and to have a permit takes... months, but It is easier to create your business." (KI-6)</i>
As a Plan B/Back-up	<i>"For me, it was to have a plan B. I love what I'm doing. It has always my passion to do mechanical engineering. ...I came here and I started from zero in mechanical engineering. I like it, but let's face it: sometimes the high income is not about you having a bachelor's degree or master's degree; it's about the situation. So, if opening this kind of shop will give me a lot of income, I will do it. I'll put my certificate aside. Doesn't matter for me." (KI-6)</i>
Fostering Socioeconomic Integration	<i>"Productivity and innovation initiatives like projects can help refugee youth integrate into the local economy and society. By acquiring new skills, participating in innovative projects, and contributing to workforce development, these individuals can enhance their social and economic integration prospects." (KI-3) "So, it's not just for business, let's not look at it that way. In other words, education is also important in order to educate ourselves and to know the culture."(KI-1)</i>
For a better future	<i>"Productivity and innovation skills are very important. In other words, new jobs that can create new employment should be created or existing jobs should be developed. For this, it is very important to support entrepreneurial activities. The university should also do this, so university graduates can also become entrepreneurs. There are many students who want to do this, they also come to us." (KI-4)</i>

Table 4: Theme Excerpt Table (con't)

City and Regional Requirements	<i>"The City of Gaziantep is a developing city that has a significant impact on the economy in Turkey, and new entrepreneurs from different backgrounds have a lot of creative ideas to showcase their creativity and potential. These projects can challenge negative stereotypes and highlight the valuable contributions that refugee individuals can make to innovation and productivity." (KI-4)</i>
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Reaching a better position as a refugee	<i>"If I have my own job I might get citizenship, which will provide me with better status. I cannot even travel with a temporary protection card. I have to have a better position. That's why I attend these programs." (KI-1)</i>
Current labor market problems	<i>"First of all, the current market conditions are making it hard for them...In other words, companies working in the domestic market are especially important due to the economic conditions. Therefore, it does not seem possible for them to get new employment, and if you add the pandemic to this, that process has made it even more difficult. They have a policy of not recruiting new staff, but removing existing ones" (KI-1)</i>

Upon scrutinizing the responses in this section, a distinct relationship emerges between the refugees' status and their socioeconomic challenges within the regional context. Gaziantep, characterized as a burgeoning city reliant on labor-intensive industries, is susceptible to informal employment practices. Consequently, due to these circumstances, many Syrians find themselves engaged in unregistered employment.

Supported by a collaborative study conducted by Gaziantep University and UNHCR, titled 'Assessment of Transition to Labor Market after Graduation of Refugee Students from Gaziantep University,' a noteworthy proportion of students assumed the role of breadwinners while pursuing their university education. Notably, existing literature (Dedeoğlu&Gökmen, 2020) alongside research endeavors undertaken by institutions like Hacettepe University and University of Gaziantep (Gültekin et al. 2018) underscore the prevalence of unregistered refugee employment. Furthermore, studies conducted by these institutions emphasize the escalating trend of informal refugee employment, augmenting the discourse surrounding this intricate socioeconomic issue. This issue exists as a reason for choosing to participate in or design productivity and innovation projects for refugees and institutions/NGOs. According to KI-7, legal issues and the risk of staying in temporary protection status longer are encouraging refugees to start their businesses. "...most probably they will work illegally and be underpaid; instead they will own their jobs and a legal status". This decision-making process results from a behavioral combination of cultural background and social and economic capital. Moreover, not everyone has this capital.

At the macro level, the employment of international staff has some challenges (Syrian Economic Sciences Society &UNDP 2018). There are limitations and quotas. Additionally, criteria for cash support by Kızılay or other NGOs/INGOs are also discouraging for refugees, said KI-4: "As soon as the person who receives the Kızılay card starts to work with a work permit in that household, the monthly cash aid is cut off." Considering the number of people living in one household is 7-8 people, giving up on Kızılay cash aid is too risky.

Additionally, the cultural background of the refugees, different institutional customs, and social service policies (like insurance and retirement policies) in Türkiye and Syria are challenges for refugees to choose legal employment. Considering the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of the research participants and project participants, it becomes evident that engagement in these training programs has the potential to bring about favorable transformations in the lives of individuals possessing specific forms of capital. The fact that the projects are carried out by the university and the majority of the target participants consist of university students and graduates reveals the importance of having this type of capital.

In this thematic analysis, the interview excerpts reveal a multifaceted exploration of themes related to productivity and innovation initiatives among refugee youth. The first theme delves into the legal

intricacies faced by refugees, highlighting the challenges of obtaining employment due to citizenship barriers and emphasizing the appeal of entrepreneurship as a more accessible option. This underscores the concept of entrepreneurship as a Plan B or backup, as articulated by participants who prioritize practical income opportunities over formal degrees.

The second theme underscores the significance of productivity and innovation projects in fostering socioeconomic integration. These initiatives offer refugees opportunities to acquire new skills, engage in innovative endeavors, and contribute to workforce development, enhancing their prospects for integration into local economies and societies. Additionally, participants emphasize the broader educational and cultural value of such projects, illuminating their potential to enhance knowledge and cultural understanding.

Furthermore, the interviews illuminate the aspiration for a better future through productivity and innovation skills. This entails creating new employment opportunities and supporting entrepreneurial endeavors, which participants believe universities should actively promote. The final theme resonates with the context of Gaziantep as a developing city with a substantial economic impact, where these projects play a crucial role in challenging stereotypes and highlighting the valuable contributions that refugees can make to innovation and productivity.

Overall, the interview excerpts illustrate a nuanced exploration of legal, practical, and societal dimensions inherent in productivity and innovation initiatives, underlining their potential to facilitate integration, create opportunities, and shape a more inclusive future for refugee youth.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study delved into the dynamic landscape of university-NGO cooperation and its role in enhancing young refugee individuals' productivity and innovation potential. Through an intricate exploration of qualitative interviews and quantitative data, we unraveled the multifaceted impact of collaborative initiatives on refugee youth. Our findings illuminated young refugees' challenges, ranging from limited access to capital, cultural differences, and legal complexities. These impediments, though significant, are not insurmountable.

The projects analyzed in this study exemplify the real-world application of university-NGO cooperation in fostering entrepreneurship and innovation among young refugees. These initiatives underscored the value of basic entrepreneurship training, mentorship, and advanced skill development. While each project yielded distinct outcomes, a common thread emerged: the transformative potential of equipping refugee youth with the tools and knowledge to navigate the intricate entrepreneurship landscape.

Moreover, our study revealed the broader implications of enhancing productivity and innovation among refugee youth. These endeavors can lead to economic growth through active participation in local economies and contribute to host communities' social and cultural fabric. The resilience and determination demonstrated by young refugee entrepreneurs in overcoming challenges highlight the latent potential awaiting cultivation.

In conclusion, the collaboration between universities, NGOs, and young refugees represents a promising avenue for igniting innovation and productivity. By fostering a supportive ecosystem encompassing financial access, training, mentorship, and cultural understanding, we pave the way for realizing entrepreneurial dreams. As we celebrate the accomplishments of the projects examined in this study, we recognize the vital role such partnerships play in shaping a more inclusive, innovative, and productive future for both refugee youth and the communities they join.

In culmination, this study has meticulously traversed the intricate realm of university-NGO collaboration, shedding light on its pivotal role in amplifying the productivity and innovation

potential inherent in young refugee individuals. Our comprehensive investigation, comprising qualitative interviews and quantitative analysis, has unveiled a tapestry of insights into the multifaceted impact of collaborative initiatives on the landscape of refugee youth. Amidst the challenges encountered—ranging from capital constraints and language barriers to legal intricacies and cultural nuances—emerges a resounding testament to the unyielding spirit of these young individuals.

The canvas of analyzed projects portrays a vivid tableau of tangible outcomes, encapsulating the essence of entrepreneurial transformation. Within this landscape, the numbers resonate as testaments to the power of collaboration: 14 distinct projects, each meticulously curated to channel the latent potential of refugee youth. As a result, a tangible tapestry of companies unfurled—a testament to the entrepreneurial aspirations realized. The figures tell the story of 3 companies, two companies, and even 18 successful technology-based businesses borne from these endeavors. A tale of 20 open companies, a 1% success rate, and a robust 9% ratio of startup triumphs.

Yet, beyond the quantifiable, these initiatives catalyze broader transformations. They ripple through the socioeconomic fabric, catalyzing economic growth as refugee youth immerse themselves in local businesses, contributing to tax revenues and weaving into the community's intricate tapestry. These enterprises do more than nurture economic productivity—they cultivate cultural understanding, fortify social bonds, and erect bridges between diverse worlds.

In conclusion, this study has comprehensively examined the pivotal role played by university-NGO collaboration in augmenting the productivity and innovation potential of young refugee individuals. Through an integrated analysis involving qualitative interviews and quantitative assessment, this research has illuminated the multifaceted impacts of collaborative initiatives on the landscape of refugee youth. Amidst an array of challenges—ranging from limited financial access and linguistic barriers to intricate legal landscapes and cultural diversities—an underlying theme emerges: the tenacity and adaptability of these young entrepreneurs.

Beyond these numerical reflections, the projects have far-reaching implications, extending beyond economic metrics. They serve as conduits for broader transformations, influencing the socioeconomic framework by integrating refugee youth into local business activities, thus contributing to local economies and community cohesion. Therefore, these projects foster economic productivity and nurture cultural integration, engendering understanding across diverse social spectra.

In summation, the harmony of university-NGO collaborations resonates as an orchestrating force for innovation and productivity. Amidst the quantitative accomplishments, the qualitative essence lies embedded—the transformation of lives and communities. The roadmap ahead appears promising, marked by the collaborative endeavors intertwining entrepreneurship, innovation, and the relentless spirit of young refugee individuals. Thus, these ventures embody the productive potential and resilience inherent in these youth, highlighting the dynamic interplay between collaborative partnerships and socioeconomic advancement.

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