

# A door opening from Syria to Turkey; migration and the process of social acceptance and accommodation: Hatay and Karabuk provinces

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## Abstract

This descriptive, cross-sectional study administered a questionnaire to 616 Syrian refugees, evaluating the participants' sociodemographic characteristics and their views on the processes associated with social acceptance and cultural and social accommodation. The problems encountered among Syrian refugees after migration included expensive housing costs, language problems, difficulties making a living and education problems. Various problems were identified among subgroups, associated with working life and cultural differences. However, according to this study, Syrian refugees believed that the processes of social acceptance and the social accommodation of refugees by local populations had begun.

## Keywords

Cultural and social accommodation, migration, social acceptance, social integration, social work, Syrian refugees

## Introduction

The civil war in Syria, which began in 2011 and continues today, together with the resulting forced migration, has resulted in serious consequences for Turkey. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2018) has described this migration as 'the greatest migration event', which has affected Turkey across economic, social, cultural and political aspects. As Syria's

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neighbour, Turkey accepted over 3.6 million Syrian refugees between 2011 and 2019 (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, 2019). In addition, experts on the topic have stated that the number of refugees is likely greater than that reported by official figures, as Syrians have migrated who, for various reasons, have not been registered. At present, approximately 4 million Syrian refugees are estimated to be living in Turkey (UNHCR, 2018).

The Turkish province with the longest Syrian border is Hatay, and this province has been significantly affected by the processes of social acceptance and social accommodation associated with this wave of refugees. According to 2018 data from the Ministry for the Management of Disasters and Emergencies, 439,142 Syrian refugees had relocated to Hatay. Because of family and cultural connections, as well as geographical proximity, Hatay is the province with the most Syrian refugees (Atasü-Topcuoğlu, 2019). When Syrians first come to Turkey, they generally stay in camps in border provinces, such as Hatay; however, to further escape the war and because not enough camps exist, over time, they have preferred to move to the interior of the country (Koser Akcapar and Simsek, 2018).

One of the provinces preferred by Syrian refugees is Karabuk, located in the interior of the country. This province is attractive for the following reasons: its proximity to the capital, Ankara; high employment rate; location on transit routes between cities; small size; affordability; and easy access to transport. Karabuk is also one of three provinces preferred by Syrian university students (Higher Education Information Management System, 2016–2017). The data for this study were collected both in a province near the Syrian border and in a province in the interior of the country. Contributions may be made to the literature by evaluating the effects of proximity to the Syrian border on social acceptance and the process of cultural and social accommodation.

Social acceptance refers to the feelings that people experience regarding their inclusion by the society in which they find themselves (Çetin, 2019), and accommodation is defined as the efforts made by migrants to readjust their lives to the conditions associated with the environment to which they have migrated (Sam, 2006). Social acceptance and the processes of cultural and social accommodation have been defined as dynamic two-way processes that occur between the migrating group and the local people (Akar and Erdoğan, 2019). During this process, both the Turkish people and the Syrian refugees must play active roles. Studies have reported that social acceptance and the processes of cultural and social accommodation between Syrian refugees and local populations are at high levels (Erdogan, 2014; ORSAM, 2015); however, other studies have reported that social acceptance and the process of accommodation have not been achieved at desired levels, which is a result that Syrian refugees do not want (Sezgin and Yolcu, 2016; Tunc, 2015). A study by Ercoskun (2015) reported serious social disparities between local populations and Syrian refugees, including economic, cultural and social issues. In contrast, other studies have reported an accelerated social acceptance process and fewer accommodation problems between the local populations and Syrian refugees in border provinces, where both groups share ethnic roots (Biçer, 2017). Syrian refugees in Turkey are increasingly likely to remain, and some have expressed no desire to return home, even when the war ends (Koser Akcapar and Simsek, 2018; ORSAM, 2015). In addition, Syrian refugees have stated that they would welcome the right to Turkish citizenship if it were offered and that they desire the right to work (Erdogan, 2014). Positive views of marriage with a non-Syrian people show that the social acceptance process has started. Furthermore, the large population of Syrian young people and children has tended to adapt more quickly to daily life, strengthening the processes of social acceptance and accommodation. Therefore, social acceptance and cultural and social accommodations, on the parts of both Turkish and Syrian people, must be quickly planned and implemented.

Social work plays a key role in speeding up the processes of social acceptance and accommodation (Li and Jiang, 2018). Social work represents a systematic method of helping individuals and groups to better adapt to society, and has been shown to be effective for solving the problems caused by migration. Social work interventions should produce solutions to the problems that arise after the migration (Akkaş, 2015) and encourage social change and development, social accommodation, empowerment, and the liberation of people. These interventions should not only provide therapeutic and rehabilitative services, but also provide preventive, supportive, educational-developer-modifying and defensive services. Refugees should receive assistance to encourage development across economic, political, social, educational and psychological aspects. Therefore, this study of refugees is expected to contribute to the planning of interventions in the field of social work.

### *Aim and research questions*

This study aims to determine the views of Syrian refugees living in Hatay and Karabuk provinces regarding the social acceptance and accommodation processes, and to compare the similarities and differences between the two provinces.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the views of Syrian refugees living in Hatay and Karabuk provinces regarding migration, social acceptance and the accommodation process?
2. Are there significant differences between Syrian refugees living in Hatay and Karabuk provinces, in terms of migration, social acceptance and the accommodation process?

## **Methods**

### *Design*

This study was conducted as a descriptive, cross-sectional study, between October 2018 and April 2019, in the Turkish provinces of Hatay and Karabuk.

### *Participants*

The population of the study consisted of individuals aged 18 and older who migrated from Syria to the Turkish provinces of Hatay and Karabuk. According to data for the year 2018, obtained from the General Directorate of Migration Management of the Turkish Interior Ministry, the number of refugees aged 18 and older living in Hatay province was 261,037, whereas in Karabuk approximately 479 refugees were identified, totalling 261,516 refugees (<https://multeciler.org.tr/turkiyedeki-suriyeli-sayisi-aralik-2018/>). The programme G\*Power 3.1 was used to determine the sample size. For the analysis to have a margin of error of 0.05 and a statistical power of 95 percent, 383 participants were required from the Hatay provincial centre and 213 participants were required from the provincial centre of Karabuk (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdogan, 2004). Therefore, the sample of the study included 403 refugees in Hatay and 213 refugees in Karabuk, totalling 616 refugees. The snowball method was used during the sample selection.

Inclusion criteria were as follows:

- being 18 years old or older;
- not having any hearing, speaking or mental problems that would hinder the study;

- being able to communicate with the interpreter;
- being able to respond independently to questions.

### *Data collection*

Data collection was performed through face-to-face interviews with the participants, with the assistance of an interpreter who spoke both Turkish and Arabic well. The researchers explained the data collection form in detail to the interpreter. Before commencing the study, the interpreter interviewed 15 participants who fit the study criteria, to assess the comprehensibility of the questions. The questions were then applied, without change.

### *Data collection form*

The form used in this study to collect data consisted of three parts. The first section contained 15 questions regarding the participants' sociodemographic characteristics, including age, length of time as a migrant, gender, marital status, children, education level, profession, income level and economic status, whereas the second section contained 24 questions assessing the characteristics of the participants' migration and social acceptance processes. The final section contained 11 questions, assessing the characteristics of the participants' cultural and social accommodation processes.

### *Statistical analysis*

Analyses were performed using the programme SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 21.0. Descriptive data were obtained as the frequency, mean and standard deviation and the chi-square test was used to analyse differences. A level of significance of  $p < .05$  was accepted for the data obtained.

### *Ethical considerations*

Written permission was obtained from the ethics committee for non-interventional clinical research of a university (Protocol No. 77192459-050.99-E.11471), from participants, and from the head of the Migration Policies and Projects Office of the General Directorate of the Turkish Interior Ministry (No. 32469041-604.02.02-E.17621). This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

## **Results**

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. Significant differences were identified for the sociodemographic characteristics between the Syrian refugees living in Hatay and Karabük provinces ( $p < .05$ ), including differences in gender, marital status, having children, education level, employment status, income level, way of making a living and economic conditions.

According to their statements, 76 percent of the Syrian refugees living in Hatay consulted with their families when deciding to migrate, 97 percent said that the primary reason for migration was war, and 39.2 percent said that they came to Hatay because they had relatives in Hatay. The refugees listed the following problems as the largest problems encountered after migration: housing rental (30%), language problems (25.6%) and making a living (17%). According to the statements

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic characteristics of participants.

Characteristics	Hatay		Karabuk		Pearson $\chi^2$ , <i>p</i>
	Mean $\pm$ SD*		Mean $\pm$ SD*		
Age	33.8 $\pm$ 12.9		23.92 $\pm$ 6.69		
Time as a refugee (years)	4.36 $\pm$ 1.94		2.72 $\pm$ 1.24		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Gender					
Female	253	62.8	44	20.7	99.022, .000*
Male	150	37.2	169	79.3	
Marital status					
Married	306	75.9	40	18.8	184.874, .000*
Single	97	24.1	173	81.2	
Children					
Yes	246	61.0	38	17.8	99.384, .000*
No	157	39.0	175	82.2	
Educational level					
8 years or less	291	72.2	21	9.9	213.778, .000*
9 years or more	112	27.8	192	90.1	
Profession <sup>a</sup>					
Çalışan (worker, officer, tradesman)	222	55.1	29	24.4	79.249, .000*
Çalışmayan (student, unemployed, housewife)	181	44.9	144	75.6	
Income status					
Income less than expenditure	219	54.3	47	22.1	59.301, .000*
Income and expenditure equal	164	40.7	146	68.5	
Income more than expenditure	20	5.0	20	9.4	
Way of making a living					
Work	299	74.2	97	45.5	24.685, .000*
Not work (public and neighbours support, previous savings)	104	25.8	116	54.5	
Economic problems					
Yes	192	47.6	47	22.1	38.390, .000*
No	211	52.4	166	77.9	
Total	403	100.0	213	100.0	

SD: standard deviation.

<sup>a</sup>Not all participants in Karabuk responded.\**p* < .05.

made by the Syrian refugees living in Karabuk, 46.9 percent consulted with their families when deciding to migrate, 69.5 percent said that the primary reason for migration was war, and 66.2 percent said that they came to Karabuk for education, security and affordability. They listed their largest problems since migration as high house rents (28.7%), language problems (18.9%) and difficulty making a living (12.2%; Table 2).

Significant differences were identified between refugees living in Hatay and Karabük provinces regarding the person or persons who decided to migrate, the primary reason for migration, the reasons for choosing where to migrate to and the basic problems faced in the place to which they migrated (*p* < .05; Table 2).

**Table 2.** Distribution of participants' views on the migration process.

Characteristics	Hatay		Karabuk		Pearson $\chi^2$ , <i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Person(s) deciding on migration					
Self	65	16.1	73	34.3	52.241, .000*
Family members	306	76.0	100	46.9	
Other (by force, other people, etc.)	32	7.9	40	18.8	
Main reason for the decision to migrate					
War	391	97.0	148	69.5	96.622, .000*
For non-war reason (education, military service, family loss, difficulty making a living, bankruptcy)	12	3.0	65	30.5	
Reasons for choice of area for settlement					
The presence of relatives	158	39.2	47	22.1	119.429, .000*
Nearness <sup>b</sup>	156	38.7	25	11.7	
Other (security, education, cheapness)	89	22.1	141	66.2	
The main problem(s) in the place of migration <sup>a</sup>					
Difficulty making a living	105	17.0	48	12.2	12.525, .006*
High rents	184	30.0	112	28.7	
Language problem	158	25.6	74	18.9	
Other (lack of employment, health problem, education problems, social exclusion, feeling like an outsider)	166	27.4	157	40.2	
Total	403	100.0	213	100.0	

<sup>a</sup>More than one response was given.

<sup>b</sup>The geographical proximity between Turkey and Syria

\* $p < .05$ .

In Hatay, 62 percent of the Syrian refugees reported that local people viewed refugees as different and that this difference concerned cultural characteristics (89.3%) and physical characteristics (10.7%). In addition, 76 percent of the refugees stated that local people behaved 'generally good and normally' towards them, 87.6 percent reported that they did not feel like strangers in Hatay, 65.8 percent stated that they felt safe in Turkey, 87.8 percent said that they were happy to be in Turkey, and nearly half (47.6%) of the respondents declared that they did not want to go back to Syria. In Karabuk, 37.1 percent of the Syrian refugees reported that the local people viewed refugees as different, mostly due to cultural characteristics (83.7%). In addition, 90.1 percent of the refugees stated that the local people received them 'generally good and normally', 82.2 percent reported that they did not feel like strangers in Karabuk, 85.4 percent said that they felt safe in Turkey, and 85 percent stated that they were happy to be in Turkey. In addition, 89.2 percent of the refugees declared that they wanted to go back to Syria, and 23 percent said that they went to Syria 'often' (Table 3).

Significant differences were found between refugees living in Hatay and Karabük concerning characteristics relating to the social acceptance process, such as refugees' opinions regarding being viewed as different by local people, refugees' opinions regarding the views of local people towards them, whether the refugees feel secure, the desire of refugees to return home or move to other countries and the frequency with which they visited Syria ( $p < .05$ ; Table 3).

In Hatay, although 50.6 percent of the refugees said that they had no problems associated with cultural and social accommodation, 22.1 percent said that they wanted to pass on their rules for daily life and traditions to future generations. In addition, 62.5 percent of the refugees said that they

**Table 3.** Distribution of views of participants on the social acceptance process.

Characteristics	Hatay		Karabuk		Pearson $\chi^2$ , <i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Refugees' opinions about being seen as different by local people					
Yes	250	62.0	79	37.1	34.848, .000*
No	153	38.0	134	62.9	
Ways in which local people see refugees as different <sup>a</sup>					
Cultural characteristics (ethnic and religious differences, education level, moral values)	360	89.3	82	83.7	2.428, .119
Physical characteristics	43	10.7	16	16.3	
Refugees' opinions about views of local people towards them					
Generally good and normal	306	76.0	192	90.1	18.70, .000*
Bad and prejudiced	97	24.0	21	9.9	
Refugees feeling like strangers					
Yes	50	12.4	38	17.8	3.360, .067
No	353	87.6	175	82.2	
Feeling safe					
Yes	265	65.8	182	85.4	27.135, .000*
Partly	138	34.2	31	14.6	
Refugees' happiness at being in Turkey					
Happy	354	87.8	181	85.0	1.001, .317
Not happy	49	12.2	32	15.0	
Desire to return home					
Yes	211	52.4	190	89.2	83.259, .000*
No	192	47.6	23	10.8	
Frequency of returning to Syria					
Never	181	44.9	134	62.9	87.363, .000*
Occasionally	197	48.9	30	14.1	
Often	25	6.2	49	23.0	
Desire or attempt to go to another country					
Yes	14	3.5	16	7.5	4.071, .044 <sup>ab</sup>
No	389	96.5	197	92.5	
Total	403	100.0	213	100.0	

<sup>a</sup>More than one response was given.<sup>b</sup>Continuity correction is the value.\**p* < .05.

had experienced problems when organising events, such as funerals or weddings, and a majority (56.6%) said that it would be possible to marry a non-Syrian person. In Karabuk, a majority of the refugees (77%) stated that they had no cultural or social problems, and 14.1 percent said that they wanted to pass on their mother tongue to future generations. In addition, 24.9 percent of the refugees stated that they had experienced problems when organising events, such as funerals or weddings, and a majority (76.5%) said that marriage with a non-Syrian person would be possible.

Significant differences were found between the refugees living in the provinces of Hatay and Karabuk regarding the cultural and social acceptance processes (*p* < .05), including their cultural and social acceptance by the local people, problems associated with accommodation by the local

**Table 4.** Distribution of views of participants on the cultural and social accommodation process.

Characteristics	Hatay		Karabuk		Pearson $\chi^2$ , <i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Cultural and social accommodation with local people					
Yes	126	31.3	132	62.0	53.978, .000*
Partly	277	68.7	81	38.0	
Problems of accommodation with local people					
Yes	199	49.4	49	23.0	40.304, .000*
No	204	50.6	164	77.0	
Traditions you want to pass on to future generations <sup>a</sup>					
Rules of daily life and traditions	101	22.1	24	11.3	37.941, .000*
Mother tongue	133	29.0	30	14.1	
All	224	48.9	159	74.6	
Problems with organising weddings or funerals					
Yes	252	62.5	53	24.9	79.013, .000*
No	151	37.5	160	75.1	
Could you marry a non-Syrian?					
Yes of course	228	56.6	163	76.5	23.922, .000*
I'd prefer not to	175	43.4	50	23.5	
Making use of news media					
Yes	174	43.2	104	48.8	1.796, .180
No	229	56.8	109	51.2	
Total	403	100.0	213	100.0	

<sup>a</sup>More than one response was given.

\* $p < .05$ .

people, the traditions they wanted to pass on to future generations, problems experienced at weddings or funerals and their approach to marrying a non-Syrian person ( $p < .05$ ; Table 4).

## Discussion

Turkey is currently hosting the most Syrian refugees, and in this study, the processes of social acceptance and cultural and social accommodation were assessed by comparing the provinces of Hatay, which is geographically close to Syria, and Karabuk, which is further away.

The largest challenge faced by Syrian refugees is thought to be living their lives when surrounded by a different culture, as cultural differences can directly affect their standards of living and working lives. Although most of the refugees included in this study, in both provinces, reported working, approximately half of those in Hatay stated that they experienced economic problems. In this study and the literature, the economic lives of Syrian refugees have been found to be significantly affected, with many reporting relatively good economic conditions before the war but suffering great losses as a result of the war, with significant declines in income levels (Cifci et al., 2016). Related departments in Turkey have offered opportunities to improve the working lives and economic conditions of Syrian refugees, including that ability to apply for permission to work in various sectors, such as health, food, industry, agriculture, energy, buildings and transportation; workplaces, such as bakeries, forestry, mining, security and education; and in different geographic



areas, such as cities, towns and villages, and monetary assistance has been offered to refugees who need it (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management, 2014). However, the refugees in this study stated that differences in working conditions existed compared with those of the local population. Most refugees stated that compared with the local population, they worked for less pay, under more difficult conditions, and without day-to-day or week-to-week job security (Kaya and Kırac, 2016; Yıldırım et al., 2017; Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016). Similarities between the findings of this study and findings reported in the literature were identified for refugees living in Hatay, whereas differences were observed for those living in Karabuk. The differences identified for refugees in Karabuk may be due to most of the participants being students, who had the economic advantages associated with their status as students, such as access to student hostels, the possibility of scholarships and family support. In addition, social resources should be determined and delivered to individuals within the framework of family-based social work interventions. Problems associated with working life can reduce buying power and the standard of living. Syrian refugees generally report that house rents are very high, resulting in multiple families living together in poor living conditions, which further supports the findings of this study (Akar and Erdoğan, 2019; Cifci et al., 2016; Genc and Özdemir, 2015; Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016). Large differences between the living conditions of refugees and local populations can have negative effects on the accommodation process. Therefore, the strongest aspects of refugee families should be discovered through social work interventions for refugees in Turkey and abroad, and their working conditions should be improved with new policies.

Among the factors that can have large effects on living conditions after the war and the reasons why refugees choose to migrate to Turkey, a few include the following: they view Turkey as a safe place, they have relatives in Turkey, the country is close to Syria, many opportunities are presented to refugees, and the local community has a similar culture (Cifci et al., 2016; Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016). In addition, the similarities between the two countries make social acceptance and the accommodation process easier. However, some studies have reported that, similar to the findings of this study in Hatay, despite the religious and cultural similarities between Syrians and Turks, differences in behaviour and thought processes exist (Genc and Özdemir, 2015; Smeeke et al., 2017; Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016). The data obtained from some studies have painted a more negative picture, suggesting that although Syrian refugees were initially viewed positively and helped, as time went on and their numbers increased, their position as 'guests' was no longer viewed as acceptable by the local people (Koca, 2016). In addition, some people are disturbed and worried by the social behaviours and aggressive attitudes of Syrian refugees (Genc and Özdemir, 2015). Many studies have emphasised that most local people of Turkish nationality report a negative attitude towards Syrians, saying that they should return to their own country as soon as possible (Akar and Erdoğan, 2019; Tarman and Gürel, 2017). Similarly, in another study, 76.5 percent of participants expressed the view that Syrians were different from local people and that this difference would cause large problems in the future (Demir, 2015). These problems are among the discontents associated with social acceptance and the accommodation process. In this study, the views of the participants in Karabuk, who did not view themselves as different from the local population, differed from reports in the literature (Karkin and Yazici, 2015; Kaya, 2015). This difference may be related to the fact that most of the participants in Karabuk were students who lived in a university environment, further away from local people. Campaigns should be planned to reduce the differences in daily life and increase the socialisation between the local people and the Syrian refugee group, which may positively affect the social accommodation process. Studies emphasise the importance of social work practices (Baláz and Čemová, 2020; Seidel and James, 2019).

Despite some problems associated with social acceptance and the process of accommodation, the data from this study and many other studies suggest that Syrian refugees feel safe in Turkey and that they are making efforts to integrate into society (Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016). However, the inadequacy of shelter facilities and various problems experienced at work continue to make this situation more difficult. Despite these problems, the participants in this study and many other studies have stated that they are happy to be in Turkey (Yıldırımaltın et al., 2017; Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016). In addition, some studies have reported, in contrast with the findings of this study, that participants do not expect conditions in Syria to become favourable, even when the war ends; therefore, they want to remain in Turkey and adopt the Turkish nationality (Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM), 2015; Yıldırımaltın et al., 2017). Moreover, in another study, respondents reported that they would opt to stay in Turkey if they were accorded nationality and permission to work, due to the similarities between the two cultures and the common religion; if not, they would prefer to relocate to a European country, which does not coincide with the findings of this study (Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016). However, a study by Şimşek (2018) reported that participants did not feel safe in Turkey and were worried about the future. The sense of wellbeing, belonging and satisfaction can be directly affected both by participants' characteristics and expectations and by the conditions under which they live, which may be responsible for the differences in the study findings. If the refugee group feels safe and does not have anxiety about the future, their sense of belonging in the society will increase, accelerating social cohesion. In the studies, the role and importance of social work interventions in increasing the sense of belonging was revealed (Alvarez-Hernandez and Choi, 2017; Runesu, 2016). Therefore, steps should be taken to reduce future anxiety of refugees when planning social work interventions, which may decrease international mobility and eliminate the disadvantages associated with continuous immigration mobility.

The biggest measure of successful social accommodation and the ongoing process of social acceptance is the reflection of these processes in daily life. Studies have been reported that both support (Biçer, 2017; Sezgin and Yolcu, 2016) and contradict (Karkin and Yazıcı, 2015; Kaya, 2015; Tarman and Gürel, 2017) the findings of this study with regard to the conditions of daily life. In the study by Tarman and Gürel (2017), most of the participants displayed a negative attitude with regard to topics such as neighbourly relations and housing costs. In a study by Kaya (2015), presenting data that supported the study by Tarman and Gürel (2017), when discussing problems of accommodating to daily life, one of the most important factors was the Syrians' positive attitudes towards polygamy and the view that, in time, this would have a negative effect on the local social structure. Similarly, the study by Karkin and Yazıcı (2015) reported that refugees had various problems living according to their own cultural norms. Studies supporting the findings of this study included data showing that cultural similarities had a positive effect on daily life, and that despite some problems, accommodation and social integration had generally been achieved (Biçer, 2017; Sezgin and Yolcu, 2016). The similarities and differences among these findings may arise from the individual characteristics of the study groups and be related to the environments in which the participants lived.

In addition, differences between Syrian refugees living in Hatay and Karabuk were observed, both in terms of sociodemographic characteristics and in terms of the processes of social acceptance and accommodation. This result demonstrated that the processes of social acceptance and accommodation do not necessarily occur at the same rates in different geographical areas or provinces of the same country. The locations of the settled areas, their histories and the different opportunities provided to refugees relative to the local population may affect these differences. In some studies, only refugees living in a single area were assessed (Biçer, 2017; Yıldız and Uzgören, 2016), whereas in other studies, the opportunities and living conditions of Syrian refugees living in

different countries were compared (Dimitrova et al., 2018). No study was identified that evaluated the processes of social acceptance and accommodation in different parts of the same country, as was performed in this study. Therefore, further studies remain necessary, including those performed throughout the country, as a whole. In addition, the settled area and the characteristics of the local population should be considered when making plans related to social acceptance and accommodation. Effective social work interventions are necessary for the successful management of the social acceptance and accommodation processes, and in order to assess the psychosocial statuses of the refugee people, at micro, mezzo and macro levels; to examine their relationships with the local people; and to determine and mobilise necessary social resources, using a multidisciplinary and holistic approach.

### *Limitations of the study*

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation is that the data are related to only two provinces of Turkey, and the findings represent only those individuals residing in these two locations. The second limitation is that most of the Syrian refugees living in Karabuk are students and have the advantages associated with that status, such as access to student residences and the possibility of scholarships; these characteristics limit the comparisons that can be made with the group living in Hatay. However, despite these limitations, this study is important for creating an awareness of the different reflections on the processes of social acceptance and accommodation that occur in different locations.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

In this study, Syrian refugees reported their belief that the processes of social acceptance and social accommodation between refugees and the local population has begun. However, various problems between the groups were also identified, particularly when issues associated with working life and cultural differences were explored. Therefore, additional studies are necessary, and new policies must be developed to help Syrian refugees integrate into the social life of Turkey, in a planned and methodical way. Reviewing the strategic planning for individuals under temporary protection may also be necessary. The cooperation among experts in various fields, including sociology, social services, and public health and civil society organisations, would have positive effects on this process. Based on studies conducted using a multidisciplinary approach, combined with larger sample groups at the national and international levels, problems associated with the social acceptance and accommodation processes of refugee groups can be overcome with effective social work interventions.

### **Declaration of conflicting interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.


### **Ethical approval**

This study was approved by the committee for non-interventional clinical research of a university (Protocol No. 77192459-050.99-E.11471). Also, institutional permission for the study was obtained from the head of the Migration Policies and Projects Office of the General Directorate of the Turkish Interior Ministry (No. 32469041-604.02.02-E.17621). In addition, participants were given information on the aims and procedures of the study before the research commenced, and their written consent was obtained.

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