

Educational Challenges that Syrian Refugee Students with Disabilities Experience

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Abstract:

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Türkiye has been receiving millions of Syrian refugees. Based on the reports of the Ministry of National Education (MONE) of Türkiye, more than one million refugees in Türkiye are of school age. Children are one of the most affected groups from the refugee flow. The literature indicated that lack of communication and language skills, limited support by parents, and economic and cultural differences were educational challenges that typically developing Syrian refugee children in Türkiye have been experiencing. However, very few studies have explored the educational issues that Syrian refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing. This study was conducted to contribute to the literature by exploring the educational challenges that Syrian refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing. Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight parents of refugee children with disabilities and eight teachers of the students. Findings of the present study indicated that most of the educational issues that children with disabilities have been experiencing were the same as those experienced by typically developing Syrian refugee children. These common issues included language and communication barriers, cultural differences, and economic issues. The present study added that limited cooperation between parents and teachers, lack of educational materials designed for bilingual children with disabilities, and lack of expectations of parents from their children with disabilities were the issues that Syrian refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing. This study provides implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

Keywords:

Educational Challenge, Syrian, Refugee, Disability, Parent, Teacher

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Türkiye has been receiving millions of Syrian refugees. Based on their status given by the Turkish government, some Syrian people are called refugees, some of them are called those with temporary protection status, and some of them are called immigrants. The United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) (2023) uses the term refugee to explain those “people who have been forced to leave from their country and have crossed international borders to find safety in another country.” The definition of refugee by the UNHCR fits the scope of this study. Furthermore, because the term refugee is more inclusive and often used by research to identify Syrians in Türkiye (Cavkaytar et al., 2021; Çetin & Koç, 2021; Tanrıku, 2017), the term refugee is used throughout this study.

Türkiye is one of the countries that has been hosting more refugees than any other country in the world (Karataş & Ayyıldız, 2021), and the majority of these refugees come from Syria. Refugee flows affect both the hosting country and mostly refugees themselves because refugee people leave their houses and country without any preparation, and they usually have difficulties finding basic needs such as shelter and food in the hosting country. Children are one of the most affected groups from the refugee flow (Serin & Paslı, 2021). Based on the reports of the Ministry of National Education (MONE) in Türkiye, more than one million refugees are at school age and only %63,29 are able to go to school. (MONE, 2020a; Ministry of Immigration, 2020).

Refugee Education

To coordinate the education of Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, the Turkish government implemented regulations and cooperated with European organizations such as the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (UNICEF, 2023). However, despite all the efforts that the Turkish government has been putting in to coordinate and facilitate the education of refugee children, research indicates that there have been some challenges regarding schools, students, and parents (Cavkaytar et al., 2021; Serin & Paslı, 2021; Tanrıku, 2017). Research that explored the education of Syrian refugees focused on different topics, including educational regulations, challenges, and the role of teachers and parents in the educational process (Çetin & Koç, 2021). The results of the research indicated that lack of access to school, language barrier (Başar et al, 2018; Serin & Paslı, 2021; Emin, 2018), lack of support by parents (Cülha & Demirtaş, 2020), and socio-cultural differences were challenges relevant to the education of refugee children in Türkiye (Cavkaytar et al., 2021; Ergün & Özsöz, 2022).

Access to education was challenging for some Syrian refugees because of different factors. A study conducted in the eastern part of Türkiye indicated that Syrian refugee children wanted to go to school, but they were not able to because they frequently moved

around and could not afford going to school (Başar et al, 2018). Furthermore, most Turkish teachers were not used to having students who were not fluent in Turkish in their classroom. Thus, including refugee children in the same classroom as their Turkish-speaking peers resulted in some challenges for teachers (Erdem, 2017). In a study, teachers were interviewed to explore the challenges refugee children have been experiencing in education. The results of the study indicated that students' lack of ability to speak Turkish was one of the main problems (Cavkaytar et al., 2021). Furthermore, Cülha and Demirtaş (2020) reported that some Syrian parents were not supportive for educating their children. Due to economic constraints, numerous parents found themselves compelled to have their children work instead of enrolling them in school (Gencer (2017). Some research also indicated that Syrian children had adaption, discrimination, and friendship problems because of differences in their culture and education system (Kiremit et al., 2018; Reçber, 2014).

Refugee Students with Disabilities

Most of the research conducted regarding the education of Syrian refugees focused on typically developing children. Few studies have explored the education of refugee children with disabilities. The educational challenges that refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing had already begun before they moved to Türkiye (UNICEF TMK, 2018). Refugee children were deprived of services that they needed because of the circumstances of warfare in Syria (Karnas, 2020). In addition, many typically developing children had physical or mental disabilities due to war. For example, some children lost their body parts, such as the hand, arm, or leg, which caused physical disability (Karnas, 2020). There is no official information regarding the current numbers of Syrian refugee children with disabilities in Türkiye, but according to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) reports, there is one person with disability in every ten houses of Syrian refugees (IOM, 2017). Therefore, a research report regarding the education of Syrian children with disabilities indicated that 6.1% of Syrian children either had a disability or had to stay at home because of their disability and health issues (Blue Pencil Relief Association, 2019).

A study that explored the identification of refugee children with disabilities indicated that a transparent evaluation and identification is employed in Türkiye for Syrian children with disabilities (Çetin & Koç, 2021). Another study reported various challenges that special education teachers who worked at Guidance and Research Centers [RAM]) have been experiencing in evaluation and identification. Cultural differences, language barriers, and children's psychological standing were reported as personal challenges. Differences in evaluation procedures were reported as process-related challenges. Couple teachers reported that they could not use some evaluation tools because they were neither convenient to translate nor culturally sensitive. The study also reported that students were too reluctant to talk, which was interpreted as a result of trauma they were potentially exposed to when they were in Syria. Accordingly, the teachers reported that they could use any evaluation tool with the help of a translator. Four teachers reported that evaluation tools could be

generated based on Syrian refugees' language and culture (Ünay et al., 2021). For an in-depth understanding of challenges that Syrian refugee children have been experiencing, more research is needed.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the challenges indicated in the literature, the present study was structured through the lens of "resumption of an ordinary life" theory, which addresses the idea that refugee children seek an ordinary life despite changes in their placement and culturally different environments (Kohli, 2014). This theory conceptualized students' experiences through safety, belonging, and success. Although refugee students have been seeking an ordinary life based on the given theory, issues that they faced at schools regarding adaptation, discrimination, and friendship (Kiremit et al., 2018; Reçber, 2014) may raise safety and belonging concerns at schools. Limited Turkish literature on refugee children with disabilities addressed concerns regarding evaluation, diagnosis, and placement of children (Ünay et al., 2021). These concerns may raise questions regarding safety and belonging because a misdiagnosed child might be placed in an educational setting that is not safe for his or her educational needs. Furthermore, once a child with a disability is placed in an educational setting that is not convenient for his or her educational needs, it is likely that the student will not be successful. Given that a student's success depends on education provided in a convenient educational setting where the student belongs, further information is needed for a comprehensive understanding of the issues that potentially prevent refugee students with disabilities from convenient education. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the educational challenges that Syrian refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the educational challenges that Syrian refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing. Specifically, the following research questions guided this study:

1. From the teachers' perspective, what are the challenges that refugee students with disabilities have been experiencing?
2. From the parents' perspective, what are the challenges that refugee students with disabilities have been experiencing?

METHOD

Research Model

This study employed qualitative research to address the challenges that Syrian refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing at special education classrooms in Türkiye. Qualitative research is used for an in-depth understanding of the experiences that participants reported (Merriam, 2013). Data were collected from parents and teachers of Syrian children with disabilities.

Participants

The sample of the study comprised eight parents of Syrian children with disabilities and their respective teachers. Each student had either moderate to severe intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder. The students have been placed in special education classrooms with their peers with disabilities. Each classroom was placed in different general education schools in Kilis provision of Türkiye, located at the Syrian border. The number of students in each classroom ranged from three to eight. Snowball sampling which is a purposeful sampling method, was used to recruit the participants. The data were collected in the fall semester of 2022–2023 academic year. Demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1. For confidentiality purposes, any information reflecting the identity of participants was not presented in the study. Instead, participants were given codes. Teachers were coded as T1, T2, T3...T8 and parents were coded as P1, P2, P3...P8. Each teacher in this study had at least one student from Syria in her/his classroom. Demographic data of participants shown at table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Teachers	Gender	Year of Exp.	Age	Education Status
T1	Male	1-5 year	26-30 years old	Licence
T2	Male	1-5 year	26-30 years old	Licence
T3	Male	1-5 year	26-30 years old	Licence
T4	Male	1-5 year	21-25 years old	Licence
T5	Male	6-10 year	26-30 years old	Licence
T6	Female	1-5 year	26-30 years old	Licence
T7	Female	1-5 year	26-30 years old	Master's Degree
T8	Female	6-10 year	31-36 years old	Licence
Parents	Gender	Age	Education Status	
P1	Male	39 years old	High School	
P2	Female	28 years old	Primary School	
P3	Female	29 years old	Primary School	
P4	Female	30 years old	Primary School	
P5	Female	32 years old	Secondary School	
P6	Female	32 years old	Secondary School	

P7	Female	34 years old	Secondary School
P8	Female	36 years old	High School

Data Collection

Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with teachers and fully structured interviews with parents. Based on the literature, interview forms were developed by the researchers and reviewed by three experts and one teacher from the field. In light of the feedback and evaluations of three field experts and a special education teacher, the forms were revised, and the revised versions were used to collect the data. The interview questions for parents were translated into Arabic and collected by three college students who were fluent in both Arabic and Turkish. The transcribed interview text was then translated into Turkish. One phone interview was conducted with each interviewee. The interviews with teachers and parents varied in duration, ranging from 17 to 28 min for teachers and 7 to 12 min for parents.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis. In the content analysis, similar data are brought together within the framework of certain codes and themes (Cresswell, 2007). The dataset was checked by all authors individually and discussed to cooperate on themes. Findings of the study were presented through each theme and some direct quotations by participants.

Ethical Considerations

The authors hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all stages of the study. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute. Ethical and security concerns were also considered during the study. The consent of the participants was considered in the study for both teachers and parents. In this context, consent forms were signed by the participants. It was declared to the participants that no information regarding their identities would be disclosed. The ethical approval document was taken from a "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive."

Ethical review board name: Kilis 7 Aralık University Ethical Review Board

Date of ethics review decision: 12.10.2022

Ethics assessment document issue number: E-76062934-044-11719

RESULTS

The findings of this study are presented through four themes derived from the data. The themes were communication and language skills, instructional challenges, socio-cultural issues, and lack of cooperation and coordination. These themes and codes were presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Challenges that Syrian refugee students with disabilities experienced

Themes	Codes	Participants
Communication and Language Skills	Communication with the teacher	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7,T8,P2
	Communication with peers	T1,T2,T4,T7,T8,P2,P5,P7,P8
	Teacher-Family Dialogue	T2,T3,T5,T6
	Language learning challenges	T1,T3,T6,T7,T8
	Prejudice against language	T1,T4,T8
Instructional Challenges	Misidentification	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7,T8
	Alphabet difference	T1,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7,T8
	Language barrier	T1,T2,T3,T5,T6,T7,T8,P2,P7,P8
	Limited family involvement	T1,T2,T4,T7,T8
	Educational material deficiencies	T1,T2,T4
Socio-cultural issues	Cultural differences	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7,T8
	Cultural biases	T2,T3,T5,T6,T8
	Economic difficulties	T1,T3,T6,T7,P2,P3,P5,P6,P7,P8
	Social Adjustment Difficulties	T1,T6,T9,P1,P3,P6
	Hygiene Culture	T2,T4,T5
Lack of cooperation and coordination	Parent-Teacher relationship	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T6,T7,T8
	Low parental expectations	T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T8
	Cooperation with management	T1,T6,T8
	Cooperation with specialists	T5,T8

Challenges in Communication and Language Skills

All teachers reported that the biggest challenge in the education of Syrian refugee students with disabilities was related to language and communication skills. Teachers usually did not have difficulties establishing emotional connections with students, but they had difficulties communicating. The majority of the teachers reported that refugee students with disabilities did not communicate with their Turkish peers at all due to the language barrier. Some teachers also stated that the quality of education and training decreased due to communication difficulties. All the teachers emphasized the benefits of interpreter support for communication. One teacher stated the following:

"Syrian students usually interact with their Syrian peers. They do not talk to Turkish students unless they must. They cannot communicate because they cannot speak the language. Their

communication with each other is better. Even if they already know Turkish, they speak Arabic. In this case, the Turkish students move away from them. Even if we try to unite them in the school, they leave from each other after a while." T3

Teachers reported that there were three main difficulties that prevented the development of Turkish language skills in refugee students with disabilities. The first challenge was lack of exposure to the Turkish language because most of the peers in the classroom and the neighborhood were Syrian. The second challenge was the lack of course contents supporting language development of children. The third challenge reported by teachers was lack of parent involvement in education. A teacher stated

"Everyone speaks Arabic in my Syrian students' homes, streets, and even at school. There is almost no environment for Turkish interaction. Their population is very dense in the Kilis province. Eighty percent of the students in our school are Syrian. If the family does not care about learning Turkish, our job becomes very difficult. Families have resistance against learning Turkish. They see Turkish education as an assimilation. There is a nationalist approach. In fact, they send their children to unofficial Arabic and language courses on the weekends." T1

Teachers in this study recommended (a) intensive language education at pre-school; (b) placement of only one refugee student in each classroom; (c) more conversation activities between Turkish students and Syrian refugee children; (d) more special education materials designed for bilingual children; and (e) encouraging parents to learn Turkish.

Parents in this study reported similar challenges as teachers reported. According to the parents, the most common challenges that students have been experiencing at schools were related to language, communication, and social interaction. While two parents reported that their children did not have problems communicating in Turkish and making Turkish friends, five parents reported that their children had difficulties communicating with their teachers and friends. However, some parents reported that communication difficulties have decreased over time. All parents reported that interpreters at schools helped them when they needed to communicate with teachers. The most prominent challenge reported by parents was communication difficulties between their children and their Turkish classmates. A parent stated

"When my daughter started school, no one came close to her. Every day when she came from school, she used to cry asking herself why am I like that. Recently, this problem has gradually started to disappear, and other children have started to get used to her." P2

Challenges in Instructional Difficulties

Teachers reported that some instructional challenges in teaching Syrian refugee children with disabilities had negative impacts on the quality of education. Language barriers and lack of communication were reported as the main challenges in teaching. In addition, many teachers reported that the special education teaching materials provided in the classrooms were inadequate. Furthermore, most teachers reported serious difficulties in

teaching, reading, and writing due to differences in the Turkish and Arabic alphabets. Teachers also believed that many of their students were not diagnosed correctly and that some of them would better be included in inclusive classrooms with their typically developing peers. Almost all teachers stated that Syrian refugee children are deprived of some out-of-school services, such as rehabilitation services, which were provided free for Turkish students. This is an important deficiency for Syrian refugee children. Some teachers also reported that lack of family support slowed down their learning at home. Two teachers stated

"They learn things specific to their own culture from their families. For example, their parents teach them to write from right to left, as in Arabic. Thus, we have difficulties in teaching writing because no matter how many times I show them, they always start writing from the right. Same issue is seen in reading activities" T1

"We also have problems with materials. We cannot get any support from the school administration regarding the shortage of materials in special education. We need to use different types of materials based on the children's needs, but we do not have enough materials for that" T3

Most parents reported that they were mostly satisfied with the school environment and the education services provided. Parents were aware that they could not support the education of their children because they could not speak the language, and they regretted it. Contrary to the teachers, most parents reported that the educational materials provided to their children were sufficient. Two statements of parents are listed below:

"My daughter loves her school and her teachers very much; she even says that she wants to go to school on holidays. she only has problems communicating with her peers. I am very satisfied with the interest of the teachers." P2

"My son do nothing at home. I do not speak Turkish either, so I do not even know if he has done his homework. I want to help and support him, but I cannot". P8

Challenges in the Sociocultural Context

Teachers reported that refugee students with disabilities have experienced many difficulties in education in terms of social, economic, and cultural aspects. The reported common difficulties were (a) problems arising from cultural differences; (b) lack of cultural adaptation in teaching; (c) problem behaviors learned in family culture; (d) economic difficulties and child labor; (e) differences in hygiene culture; and (f) socio-cultural prejudices.

Teachers had difficulties in social skills and behavior training due to cultural differences. For example, some behaviors that were considered inappropriate in Turkish culture were normal in Syrian children's own culture or vice versa. Furthermore, because of cultural differences, students have had difficulties in understanding some concepts related to family and society in the curriculum. Some teachers reported some behaviors of refugee students, such as sharing the same spoon with someone else and eating with hands were

inappropriate behaviors that they witnessed in schools. Therefore, some teachers prioritized goals related to social and cultural adaptation and took this circumstance into consideration when preparing IEPs. In addition, male teachers reported that the mothers of their Syrian students had never communicated with them and usually refused to come to school. The teacher stated:

"When I invite the mother to school to talk about the child's progress, she doesn't come because I am a man... She doesn't want to communicate with me, the interpreter, who is a man, doesn't want to communicate with her much, I sometimes feel hopeless." T2

The parents did not mention cultural differences but addressed some prejudices and economic difficulties. One parent reported that they thought having a child with a disability was a punishment given to them by God. Many refugee children frequently missed school because they worked in various part-time jobs after school. A parent stated:

"The teacher used to ask the children to buy some materials, and when I told my daughter that I couldn't buy the materials, she used to get upset and say that everyone else was bringing the materials and she was the only one not bringing them to school. Therefore, I had to borrow money to buy the materials. I walk with her two kilometers to school every day. Sometimes I cannot. There is no shuttle service. She is incapable of going to school on her own." P2

Challenges in Co-operation and Coordination

Teachers experienced many challenges with regard to co-operation and coordination with parents. The common challenges were insufficient parent support, low parental expectations, differences in school management, and insufficient expert support. Most of the teachers stated that lack of family support and care weakens the quality of education. Some teachers emphasized that small numbers of parents were more caring, sensitive, and open to cooperation. A teacher stated

"Family is essential in special education. Education of children with disabilities is a process that cannot be carried out by the school alone or that the family can overcome alone. I only do homework on the weekends for repetition of what I taught at school, but the students are not assisted or tracked at home. Usually, the family has no expectations from the student. They only send them to school to keep them busy." T3

Parents were usually satisfied with the services provided at schools and did not feel a deficiency in cooperation and coordination. Parents reported that they were satisfied with the communication and interest of teachers and school administration. A parent stated

"Our teacher is very caring. We talk from time to time and get information about our child. We try supporting them in everything we do, and I really hope we will continue to support them. I don't know how to read and write because I only studied until the fourth grade, and I don't speak Turkish, but his older sisters speak Turkish, and they help my child." P3"

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explored the challenges that special education teachers have been experiencing with their Syrian refugee children with disabilities in their classrooms. Most of the research on refugee children in Türkiye was conducted regarding the education of typically developing Syrian children. Few studies have addressed the education of refugee children with disabilities. These studies focused on the challenges of evaluation and identification (Çetin & Koç, 2021; Ünay et al., 2021). This study mostly focused on challenges in classrooms and found similar challenges that were reported for typically developing children in the literature. This study indicated some unique findings that were not mentioned in research conducted on typically developing children.

Access to education has been reported as a challenge for typically developing children (Kultaş, 2017). Because of economic issues, some parents forced their children to work instead of sending them to school (Çülha & Demirtaş, 2020). The findings of this study indicated the same issue for refugee children with disabilities. Shortage of economic situation of parents was a factor that prevented refugee children from accessing education. One parent reported that her child often missed school and collected paper to contribute to her parents' economics. Child labor is a serious issue in many countries, and it was very common among refugee children in Türkiye. The United Nations or UNICEF can handle this issue by providing financial support for parents as long as they let their children enroll in school regularly.

This study found that the biggest challenge regarding the education of refugee children with disabilities was related to language and communication. Language and communication issues were also reported in the literature as one of the main challenges regarding the education of typically developing Syrian children. The Turkish government is aware of this issue, so projects such as PIKTES have been employed to increase the Turkish language skills of refugee children. However, as of 2023, almost all teachers and numerous parents still address the language and communication barriers in the classroom. Therefore, the efforts that the Turkish government has put in to increase the Turkish language skills of refugee children have not been very effective. As one of the teachers in the present study recommended, the number of refugee children in the classrooms should be decreased to prevent them from speaking Arabic among each other at school. In addition, the curriculum should be modified by adding activities aiming to increase language and communication skills.

Similar to the findings in the Turkish literature, some teachers in this study reported that the evaluation and diagnosis of some Syrian children were problematic and biased. This study added that Syrian children were deprived of rehabilitation services, which is an important deficiency for Syrian refugee children with disabilities. Furthermore, some teachers reported that lack of family support slowed down students' learning at home. To overcome these issues, policies are needed to simplify the easy access of refugee children

with disabilities to rehabilitation services. Furthermore, a parent in this study reported that having a child with a disability was a punishment given to them by God. This finding is interesting, and this belief might be common among many Syrians about children with disabilities. Given this perspective, it is not surprising that teachers reported insufficient parental support and low parental expectations. To overcome this issue, parents should be trained regarding the importance of parental support for the education of their children with disabilities.

The literature indicates that discrimination against refugee children and lack of friendship between Turkish and refugee children are some of the challenges in classrooms (Kiremit et al., 2018). This challenge was also reported for children with disabilities in this study. Some parents reported that the language barrier has been decreasing as Syrian students learn Turkish over time. This study found that parents played an important role in this issue. Some parents were worried about being assimilated into Turkish culture so they have not had a positive approach to Turkish education and culture. Probably, the children of these parents could not improve their language skills and missed most of the classes, which potentially caused prejudice against the Turkish language and culture.

Furthermore, this study indicated that some cultural behaviors could result in discrimination against refugee children by Turkish students. For example, eating with one's hand is unacceptable in Türkiye, but is very typical in Syrian culture. Using each other's kitchen utensils is not appropriate in Turkish culture, but it is often seen among Syrian children. Once refugee children demonstrate these behaviors when they are with their Turkish peers, they might want to stay away from them. To overcome this issue, Turkish students should be taught to be respectful toward cultural differences and refugee children should be taught to be sensitive toward the culture in which they live.

Although most parents in the present study were satisfied with the education that their children with disabilities have been receiving, teachers in the present study reported some challenges that affected the quality of education. Some of the findings, which were not reported for typically developing children in the literature but were reported for children with disabilities in the present study, were low parental expectations and lack of special education materials needed for bilingual students with disabilities in the special education classrooms. In particular, refugee children with disabilities were limited in language, which made them more dependent on visual materials. Therefore, school districts in Türkiye should prioritize the material needs of special education classes. Districts might ask for material support from universities close to them.

Language and communication barriers prevented parents from cooperating with teachers. However, most parents in this study indicated that translators were very helpful when they needed to communicate with teachers. It seemed that parents were willing to cooperate, but language barriers resulted in a lack of cooperation. The schools might organize some events where refugee parents and translators are invited to increase

cooperation between teachers and parents. Furthermore, some teachers in this study reported lack of care by parents. One possible explanation for teachers' perception that refugee parents are not sufficiently involved could be cultural differences. Some male teachers in this study reported that mothers of their Syrian children never talked to them, which caused a lack of cooperation between parents and teachers. To overcome this issue, Turkish male teachers should better cooperate with the fathers of their Syrian students.

This study explored the educational challenges that Syrian refugee children with disabilities have experienced. Sixteen participants, including eight teachers and eight parents, participated in the study. The findings of this study indicated that the educational challenges that refugee children with disabilities have been experiencing were similar to the educational challenges that typically developing children have been experiencing. The need for more visual materials for refugee children with disabilities and cultural beliefs toward children with disabilities were some of the findings that were not reported in the literature for typically developing children. Policy makers, teachers, and parents should consider the implications of this study for practice.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has some implications for practice. The financial situation of Syrian parents is an important issue that prevented some students from going to school. Therefore, some regulations should be enacted to keep school-age Syrian children at school. Furthermore, the number of projects such as PIKTES should be increased because a shortage of language and communication has negative effects on teaching, learning, and cooperation. Both Turkish and Syrian children should be taught to be aware of cultural differences. Teachers should put more effort into finding or developing materials based on students' needs.

The findings of this study should be interpreted with respect to its strengths and limitations. The interviews with parents were conducted using a structured interview form by college students. Thus, the interview durations were shorter, resulting in limited data from parents. Semi-structured interviews conducted by professionals would provide more data from parents. In addition, only one father participated in the study. Fathers may express different challenges than mothers. Therefore, it would be better to have more fathers as participants in the study. The data of this study were obtained in Kilis province of Türkiye, where Syrian children have the highest density compared to other provinces. Different findings can be found in cities where refugee children have a lower density. The literature lacks quantitative studies regarding the content of this study. Future researchers may conduct quantitative studies with more participants.

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Data Availability Declaration

While the primary datasets utilized in this study are not publicly accessible due to certain constraints, they are available to researchers upon a formal request. The authors have emphasized maintaining the integrity of the data and its analytical rigor. To access the datasets or seek further clarifications, kindly reach out to the corresponding author. Our aim is to foster collaborative academic efforts while upholding the highest standards of research integrity

Author Contributions

Abdullah EKER, Mustafa KARNAS, and Beyza ALPAYDIN, contributed equally to this work. They collaboratively handled the conceptualization, methodology design, data acquisition, and analysis. Each author played a significant role in drafting and revising the manuscript, ensuring its intellectual depth and coherence. All authors have thoroughly reviewed, provided critical feedback, and approved the final version of the manuscript. They jointly take responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the research.

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