

# A Different Perspective of Teachers on The Issue of Syrian Students in Türkiye: A Comparative Analysis

Ömer Faruk Abide<sup>1</sup>

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The purpose of this study is to comparatively examine the opinions of teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms and those who have never been involved in educational activities with Syrian students. The study is based on the case study design, a qualitative research approach. The study group consists of primary school teachers who work at public schools and are divided into two groups considering the presence of Syrian students in their classrooms. In the research process, the data were collected using a semi-structured interview form and analysed through the content analysis method. As a result of the analyses, five themes were created to represent the problems experienced by the teachers who were instructing Syrian students. In this context, several codes were listed under the themes of "communication problems", "disciplinary problems", "adaptation problems", "academic problems", and "other problems". The problems considered likely by the teachers who did not have any Syrian students were grouped under four themes, including "communication problems", "disciplinary problems", "adaptation problems", and "academic problems", and some codes were presented relevantly. Likewise, four themes were created to represent the solutions proposed by the teachers in both groups for the aforementioned problems, and several codes were listed under the themes of "academic measures", "language education", "harmonisation activities" and "other measures". With these research findings, the problems and solution proposals expressed by the teachers were compared based on the presence of Syrian students in the classroom. Then the similarities and differences were listed. Consequently, it was revealed that the teachers in both groups mainly highlighted language issues as part of the communication problems faced in the education of Syrian students. It was also identified that the teachers in both groups expressed that the problems arising from the presence of Syrian students in the classroom would have highly adverse effects on other students. In addition, it was concluded that the teachers who had Syrian students mostly proposed solutions within the scope of academic measures and language education, whereas the other group of teachers generally offered solutions regarding language education and harmonisation activities.

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**Keywords:** Syrian students, education, problems, solution proposals

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## INTRODUCTION

The history of humanity has witnessed many great migrations for various reasons, and millions of people have left their countries and tried to survive in different geographies. Wars can be considered the primary reason that causes mass migrations. For instance, the self-immolation of a street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi in response to the oppression he suffered in his country sparked the Arab Spring in Tunisia in 2010, which later spread and caused an internal disturbance in many Arab geographies. Syria was one of the countries that the relevant events most severely affected. The turmoil in the country brought about a civil war in a short time, and it led to mass migrations. The greatest impact of these migrations has been on the Republic of Türkiye, which neighbours Syria with a land border of 911 kilometres. According to the current data from the United Nations Refugee Agency, the number of Syrian refugees registered in Türkiye has reached 3,650,000 in the twelve years since the Syrian civil war began in 2011 (Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2023). According to the data released by the Presidency of Migration Management of Türkiye, there are 3,344,092 Syrians registered under temporary protection in the country as of 26 June 2023 (Presidency of Migration Management [PMM], 2023). When the available data are reviewed, it is observed that the data released by the United Nations and the official data released by the Presidency of Migration Management are consistent. Considering the distribution of Syrian refugees by age, it is identified that the number of school-age children (5-18 years old) is 1,149,825 (PMM, 2023). Figure 1 presents the numerical data for the Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye.

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<sup>1</sup> Gazi University, ofabide@gmail.com, orcid.org/0000-0002-1386-9894

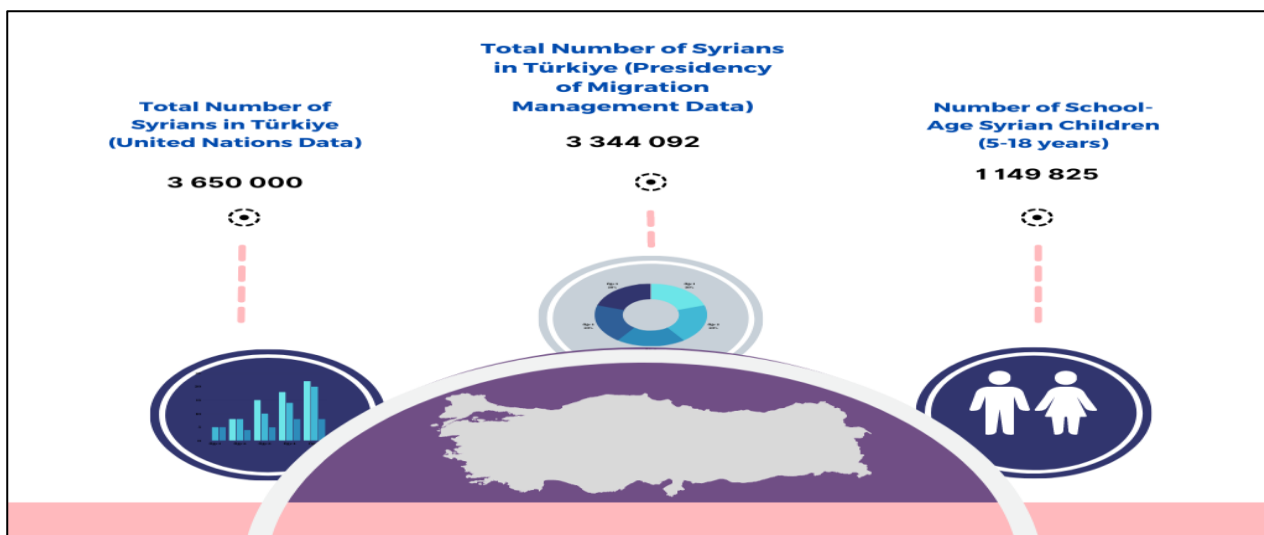


Figure 1. Numerical data for the Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye

As can be inferred from the statistical data, the number of Syrians who have taken refuge in Türkiye due to the war in their country is now millions, and Türkiye focuses on their educational needs as well as their basic needs, namely nutrition, shelter and health, since the very beginning. In this context, Temporary Education Centres (TEC) were first established to meet the basic educational needs of refugee children. In these centres, primary and secondary education was provided in Arabic following the Syrian curriculum (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2014). As the Syrian civil war continued more severely and caused new migration waves, Türkiye had to develop new policies for the long term regarding the education of Syrian children. The first step taken accordingly was the issuance of the circular “Educational Services for Foreigners” within the body of the Ministry of National Education. In this way, a standard was set by detailing the educational activities to be offered to immigrants. As of the 2016-2017 academic year, refugee children in grades 1, 5 and 9 were sent to public schools instead of TECs. As of the 2018-2019 academic year, TECs were closed and the educational activities of Syrian refugee children began to be provided by public schools, which can be said to have led to a new phenomenon in the Turkish education system.

The relevant literature review has revealed that the studies conducted in Türkiye are generally aimed at identifying the problems that Syrian students face in their education life (Alkalay, Kırıl & Erdem, 2017; Bal, Cavkaytar, Artar & Uluyol, 2021; Çelik, 2019; Emiroğlu, 2018; Ertekin, 2019; Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Kardeş & Akman, 2018; Memduhoğlu & Kultas, 2020; Özer, Komşuoğlu & Ateşok, 2016; Silgan, 2022; Tanrıkulu, 2017). Additionally, there are meta-analysis and meta-synthesis studies in which research addressing the educational problems of Syrian students is evaluated (Aytaç, 2021; Sarier, 2020). In another study, Şimşek (2019) discusses the obstacles to Syrian children’s access to education in Türkiye and the solution to these obstacles. Moreover, Duman (2019) evaluates the function of education in terms of Syrians’ integration into society. Another study addresses disciplinary problems arising from Syrian students’ involvement in the education process at the primary education level (Demir, Özdemir & Köse, 2020). Furthermore, there are studies investigating the problems experienced by teachers concerning the education of Syrians (Özenç & Saat, 2019; Sözer & Işiker, 2021).

When the foreign literature on the subject is reviewed, the most frequently encountered studies are on the identification of educational problems experienced by refugees. In her study, Almadani (2018) aims to identify the problems faced by Syrian refugee students at primary schools in the United States of America and offers some suggestions based on the research results. Similarly, Alkhaldeh (2018) addresses the problems that Syrian students encounter at schools in Jordan. This study can be considered important in that it presents the problems in the education of refugees even between two countries that speak the same language and have similar cultures (Jordan-Syria). In addition, Koehler and Schneider (2019) examine the educational problems of young refugees in Europe. In their study, Hadid and Hos (2012) investigate the situation of Syrian refugees in Türkiye within the scope of equal opportunity in education. Another study lists the problems faced by refugee children at primary schools in London (O’Shea, Hodes, Down, & Bramley, 2000). Likewise, Galloway and Jenkins (2005) attempt to identify the problems of foreign students in Texas and California in the USA.

It can be stated that the relevant studies in the national and foreign literature are similar in general. It is observed that the subject emphasised the most in both literature is the identification of the problems experienced by refugee children in the education process and the solution proposals for these problems. On the other hand, this study addresses the situation from a different perspective. The problems experienced or might be experienced by teachers who had Syrian students and teachers who were not involved in educational activities with Syrian students and the teachers' solution proposals for these problems were identified and the data obtained were analysed comparatively. Besides, the perceptions of the teachers in both groups on how the problems faced or likely to be faced by Syrian refugee students in the education process would affect other students in the classroom were discussed comparatively. In this context, the general purpose of the study is to comparatively analyse the opinions of teachers who have Syrian students and those of teachers who have never been involved in educational activities with Syrian students regarding the problems experienced or likely to be experienced by Syrian refugee students in the education process and the solution proposals for these problems. In line with this purpose, the following questions are addressed to be answered:

1. What are the problems experienced by teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms regarding the education of Syrian students?
2. To what extent do the teachers who have Syrian students think that the problems they experience in the education of Syrian students affect other students in the classroom?
3. What are the solutions proposed by teachers who have Syrian students for the problems they experience in the education of Syrian students?
4. What are the problems that teachers who do not have any Syrian students consider likely to be experienced in the education of Syrian students?
5. To what extent do the teachers who do not have Syrian students think that the problems likely to be experienced in the education of Syrian students may affect other students in the classroom?
6. What are the solutions proposed by teachers who do not have any Syrian students for the problems they consider likely to be experienced in the education of Syrian students?
7. What are the similarities and differences between teachers who have Syrian students and teachers who do not have any Syrian students regarding their statements about the problems related to the education of Syrian students, the effects of these problems on other students, and the solutions to these problems?

## **METHOD**

This section presents information about the research model, the population and sample of the study, and the data collection and analysis methods.

### **Research Design**

This is a descriptive study in that it comparatively investigates the opinions of teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms and those of teachers who have never been involved in educational activities with Syrian students. The purpose of descriptive studies is to present the findings to the reader following their organisation and interpretation. The data obtained in this context are first clearly and systematically described, and the results are then determined based on the descriptions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p.239). Accordingly, qualitative approaches were used in the research process considering the purpose of the study. The study was conducted based on the case study design, a qualitative research approach. Qualitative case studies are aimed at in-depth investigation of one or more cases (Creswell, 2002). In this case study, the purpose is to thoroughly examine the opinions and experiences of teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms and those of teachers who have never been involved in educational activities with Syrian students.

### **Participants**

The study group was determined using criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods. This sampling method aims for cases that meet a set of predetermined criteria. The respective criteria may be taken from an available list of criteria or prepared by the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p.122). In this context, among the teachers who were working at public schools, teachers who had Syrian refugees in their classrooms and teachers who were not involved in educational activities with Syrian students, in other words, who had no Syrian students, were set as the criterion.

*Study Group 1:* To collect data from the study group, a group was formed with teachers working in Hatay. Accordingly, the data were collected from 27 primary school teachers within the scope of the study. The main criterion in determining the subjects in the first study group was the presence of Syrian students in their classrooms. The research data were obtained through interviews held with these teachers.

*Study Group 2:* To collect data from this study group, a group was formed with teachers working in Ankara. Within the scope of the study, the data were collected from 27 primary school teachers. The main criterion in determining the subjects in the second study group was that they had never been involved in educational activities with Syrian students and had no Syrian students in their classrooms. The data were obtained through interviews conducted with these teachers.

#### Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview form, a qualitative data collection tool, was used in the study to identify the opinions of teachers who had Syrian students in their classrooms and teachers who had never taught Syrian students. With this tool, the same kind of information can be obtained from different people on similar topics (Patton, 2002). During the preparation of the interview form used in the study, questions were first formulated based on the relevant literature to provide an in-depth understanding of the subject in line with the purpose of the study, and an expert experienced in qualitative research was asked for their opinion. It was considered that the interview form had a language that allowed participants to easily understand and answer the questions. In addition, the interview form was tested through a pilot implementation and finalised by taking into account the participants' feedback, the interview durations and the expert's opinion. In this context, the participants were asked three questions considering the characteristics of each study group. The questions addressed to the groups are presented in Table 1.

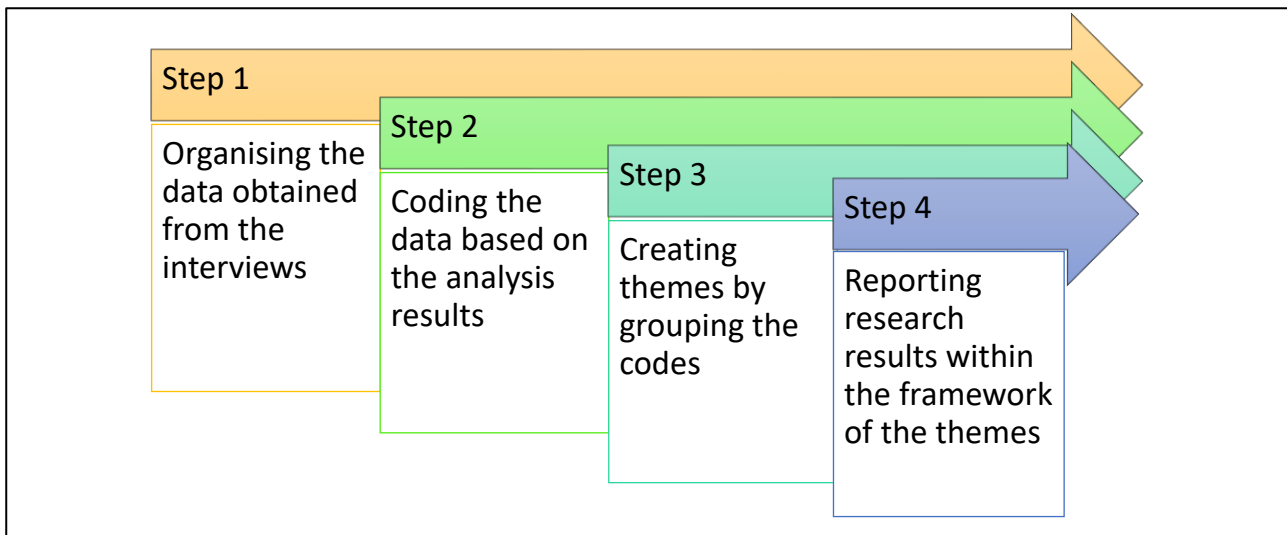
**Table 1. Questions addressed to the study groups**

Study Group 1	Study Group 2
What are the problems that you experience with Syrian refugee students in your classroom?	If you had Syrian refugee students in your classroom, what problems do you think you might experience?
To what extent do you think these problems affect other students in your classroom? ○ Not at all ○ A Little ○ Partially ○ Considerably	To what extent do you think these problems would affect other students in your classroom? ○ Not at all ○ A Little ○ Partially ○ Considerably
What do you suggest to solve these problems?	What would you suggest to solve these problems?

The interview forms were administered voluntarily. It was underlined to the participants that ethical rules would be followed during the study and that their personal information would be kept confidential. The interview form was administered on online platforms, there was no attempt to affect the opinions of the participants during the implementation, and they were authentically presented.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analysed using the content analysis method to identify the opinions of the teachers who had Syrian students and the teachers who had never taught Syrian students. The main purpose of content analysis is to explain the research findings in line with the collected data through alternative ways to organise data and report results (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p.242). The content analysis carried out in this study consists of four steps, which are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Steps of content analysis performed in the study

As observed in Figure 2, the data obtained from the interviews held with the teachers were first organised, and then codes were created as a result of the content analysis. Afterwards, similar statements were grouped and themes representing the opinions of the teachers were created. In the last step, the data obtained were interpreted within the scope of the relevant themes.

#### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, several methods were employed in this study. However, it is observed in the relevant literature that different concepts are now used in qualitative research instead of the generally accepted concepts of “validity” and “reliability” in quantitative research. In this context, the concept of “credibility” is preferred over “internal validity” and “transferability” over “external validity”. Likewise, the concept of “dependability” is preferred over “internal reliability” and “confirmability” over “external reliability” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

Accordingly, the expert review method was used to ensure the credibility of the research. Within the scope of this method, a meeting was organised with a competent expert in the field of qualitative research. At the meeting, the whole research process was explained to the expert, and the data and the results were presented. The expert reviewed the raw data obtained and their analysis, and at the end of the meeting, gave feedback on the appropriateness of the processes followed. The thick description strategy was used to ensure the transferability of the research. For this purpose, the participants’ opinions selected by lot were quoted without any changes. As for the dependability of the research, the consistency analysis method was used. This strategy allows viewing the research from an outside perspective to ensure consistency between the findings obtained from the research and the raw data obtained with the data collection tool (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p.283). Relevantly, Creswell (2021) suggests comparing the codes created by the researcher and another expert on the subject. In this respect, the research findings and the raw data obtained through the data collection tool were submitted to an expert competent in qualitative research to compare the findings. The consistency between the raw data and the findings was tested using the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) (Reliability = Agreement / {Agreement + Disagreement}). According to the formula, the intercoder consistency should be at least 80% for qualitative reliability. The results obtained from the evaluation of the experts revealed that the consistency between the raw data and the meanings attributed to the data by the researcher was 84%. It can thus be stated that the coding is consistent. A consensus was also reached with the relevant expert on the themes representing the codes. For the confirmability of the study, the confirmation review strategy was used. For this purpose, an outside expert confirmed that the codes randomly selected among those created in the study were included in the raw data.

#### **FINDINGS**

The findings obtained in the research are discussed below in line with the sub-purposes of the study.

##### **Findings Regarding the First Sub-Purpose of the Study**

To reach the findings for the first sub-purpose of the study, the problems experienced by the teachers who had Syrian students in their classrooms were examined, and the respective findings are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Problems Experienced by Teachers Who Have Syrian Students in Their Classrooms**

Theme	Code	Frequency (f)	Total
Communication Problems	Language problems	22	24
	Inability to communicate with parents	2	
Disciplinary Problems	Disrespect to the teacher and lessons	2	9
	Not taking school and lessons seriously	1	
	Distracting the teacher by speaking Arabic in the classroom	1	
	Asking for privilege	1	
	Constant dialogue with each other	1	
	Disciplinary problems arising from cultural differences	1	
	Exhibiting behaviours disrupting the flow of the lesson	1	
	Indiscipline	1	
Adaptation Problems	Acculturation difficulties	7	8
	Problems faced in conveying values	1	
Academic Problems	Not doing the homework assigned	1	6
	Passing class without learning Turkish	1	
	Lack of interest in verbal lessons	1	
	Inefficiency in activities in Turkish language lessons	1	
	Having difficulty understanding lessons	1	
Other Problems	Turkish illiteracy of some students	1	1
	Hygiene issues	1	

It is observed in Table 2 that the problems experienced by the teachers with Syrian students in their classrooms are grouped under five themes, including “communication problems”, “disciplinary problems”, “adaptation problems”, “academic problems” and “other problems”. The most common problem under the theme of communication problems is language problems (f:22). Under the theme of disciplinary problems, the teachers mostly had problems of disrespect to the teacher and lessons (f:2). Considering the adaptation problems, acculturation difficulties (f:7) are most frequently encountered. In the theme of academic problems, the problems experienced by the teachers range from not doing the homework assigned (f:1), lack of interest in verbal lessons (f:1), inefficiency in activities in the Turkish language lessons (f:1) to having difficulty understanding lessons (f:1), Turkish illiteracy of some students (f:1), and passing class without learning Turkish (f:1).

Other problems include hygiene issues (f:1). When all the themes are evaluated overall, it is observed that the most common problem faced by the teachers who have Syrian students is the “language problem”.

The opinions of the teachers regarding the problems that they experienced with Syrian students were selected by lot and presented below:

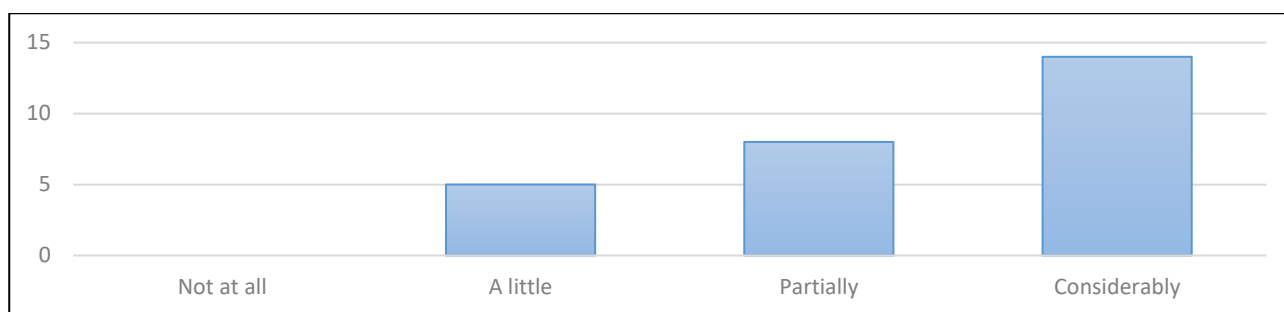
*Teacher 5 With a Syrian Student in the Classroom: They have difficulty speaking Turkish. There is a cultural problem, their perspective on life is different from the Turks, and they are a bit more comfortable and live in the moment.*

*Teacher 8 With a Syrian Student in the Classroom: Lack of communication due to inadequacies in language, not taking school and lessons seriously, not doing the homework assigned, asking for convenience all the time, continuously chatting in Arabic with each other as I do not speak Arabic... They distract and demotivate me.*

*Teacher 17 With a Syrian Student in the Classroom: Our biggest problem is the mother tongue, and we also have disciplinary problems due to cultural differences. When students do not understand the lesson, they get bored, and we experience problems that disrupt the flow of the lesson.*

#### **Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Purpose of the Study**

To reach the findings regarding the second sub-purpose of the study, the teachers were asked “To what extent do you think these problems affect the other students in your classroom?”, and the relevant findings are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** The extent to which the problems experienced by the teachers who have Syrian students affect other students in the classroom

It is observed in Figure 3 that approximately 52% of the teachers (f:14) think that the problems they experience due to the Syrian students affect other students considerably. Approximately 30% of the teachers (f:8) state that the relevant problems affect other students partially while 18% (f:5) indicate a little impact. No teacher (f:0) thinks that the problems experienced due to the presence of Syrian students in the classroom do not affect other students. In other words, none of the teachers included in the study sample thinks that the relevant problems do not affect the whole class.

#### Findings Regarding the Third Sub-Purpose of the Study

To reach the findings for the third sub-purpose of the study, the solution proposals of the teachers who had Syrian students for the problems were identified, and the findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Solution proposals of the teachers who have Syrian students for the problems experienced in the classroom**

Theme	Code	Frequency(f)	Total
Academic Measures	Educating Syrian students in separate classrooms	5	19
	Not allowing students to pass without learning Turkish	5	
	Limiting the number of Syrian students in the classroom	2	
	Assigning Arabic-speaking teachers for their education	2	
	Ensuring that they start education from kindergarten	1	
	Not including them in the compulsory education	1	
	Abolishing Foreign Student Exam (YÖS)	1	
	Assigning Arabic-speaking assistants to classes	1	
	Providing a good basic education	1	
Language Education	Ensuring that Syrian students learn Turkish	9	10
	Providing Arabic education for teachers	1	
Harmonisation Activities	Teaching Turkish culture to Syrian students	4	6
	Ensuring cooperation among the Ministry, school administration, teachers, parents and students	1	
	Increasing communication between teachers and parents	1	
Other Measures	Sending refugees back to their countries	2	3
	Preventing privileges	1	

As can be seen in Table 3, the solutions that the teachers who have Syrian students offer for the problems experienced in the classroom are grouped under four themes, which are listed as “academic measures”, “language education”, “harmonisation activities”, and “other measures”, respectively. The most frequently repeated solutions in the theme of academic measures include educating Syrian students in separate classrooms (f:5) and not allowing students to pass without learning Turkish (f:5). Under the theme of language education, the solution suggested the most was ensuring that Syrian students learn Turkish (f:9). Considering harmonisation activities, the most frequently expressed solution is teaching Turkish culture to Syrian students (f:4). Finally, sending refugees back to their countries is included in the theme of other measures (f:2) as the primary solution proposal. The overall evaluation of the themes indicates that the solution mostly offered by the teachers is ensuring that Syrian students learn Turkish.

The opinions of the teachers on solutions to the problems that they experienced with Syrian students were selected by lot and presented below:

*Teacher 10 With a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* The privileges given make them feel overconfident and untouchable in the environment they live in. I think this should be the first thing to prevent. No matter how much we try to teach, this situation will be maintained as long as no sanctions are imposed on these students.

*Teacher 16 With a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* We speak Turkish in the classroom, yet it is necessary to speak Arabic while explaining some things. Unfortunately, most of our teachers, including me, do not speak the language. There should be an Arabic-speaking assistant in the classroom.

*Teacher 24 With a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* Bringing non-speakers of Turkish together in a separate classroom and assigning Arabic-speaking teachers to these classes.

#### **Findings Regarding the Fourth Sub-Purpose of the Study**

To reach the findings for the fourth sub-purpose of the study, the opinions of teachers who did not have any Syrian students regarding the problems that they might experience were examined, and the respective findings are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Problems likely to be experienced by teachers who do not have Syrian students in the classroom**

Theme	Code	Frequency (f)	Total
Communication Problems	Language problems	24	25
	Problems in communicating with parents	1	
Adaptation Problems	Students' adaptation to the class	9	18
	Acculturation	5	
	Social adaptation	2	
	Adaptation to school culture	1	
	Compliance with rules	1	
Disciplinary Problems	Peer bullying	2	6
	Communication-based rage problems	1	
	Unrest among students	1	
	Exclusion	1	
Academic Problems	Indiscipline	1	4
	Allocating extra time to Syrian students for individualized education	1	
	Reading and comprehension	1	
	Difficulty understanding lessons	1	
	Motivating students for lessons	1	

As observed in Table 4, problems that teachers who do not have any Syrian students think that they may experience while educating Syrian students are grouped under four themes, which include "communication problems", "adaptation problems", "disciplinary problems", and "academic problems", respectively. The language problems of Syrian students (f:24) stand out among the problems most likely to be experienced under the theme of communication problems. Considering the adaptation problems, the most frequently stated problem is the adaptation of Syrian students to the class (f:9). In the theme of disciplinary problems, peer bullying is the problem repeated the most (f:2). The academic problems that the teachers consider likely to be experienced include reading and comprehension (f:1), difficulty understanding lessons (f:1), motivating Syrian students for lessons (f:1), and allocating extra time to Syrian students for individualized education (f:1). When all the themes are evaluated overall, it is identified that the problem considered most likely by teachers who do not have Syrian students is the language problem.

The randomly selected statements of the teachers who do not have Syrian students regarding their opinions on the problems they may experience in the classroom are presented below:

*Teacher 21 Without a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* I may observe a racist approach towards them from their peers, have language problems, and problems such as being unfamiliar with Turkish culture.

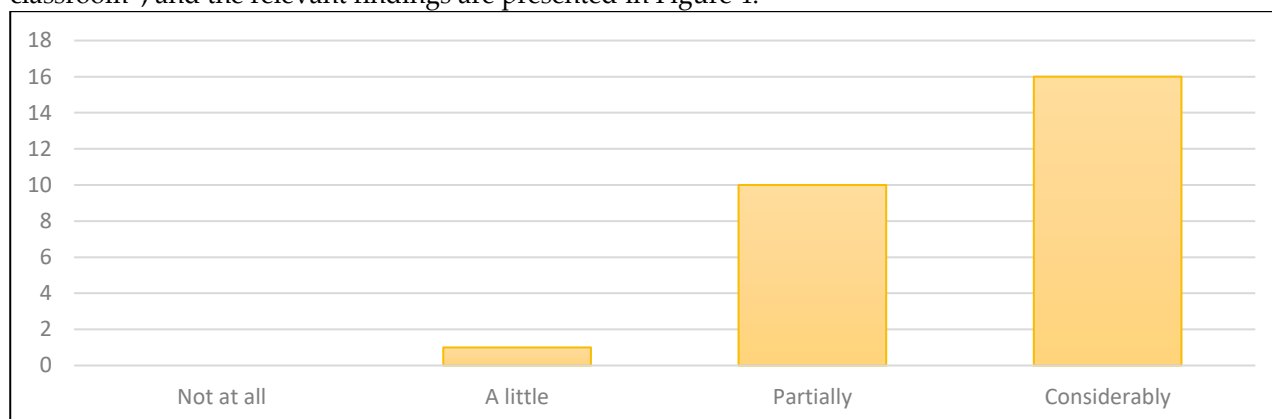
*Teacher 3 Without a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* There may be language problems. Also, allocating extra time for individualized education during lessons and integrating the child may be a problem.

*Teacher 9 Without a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* I believe that there may be language problems, adaptation problems, communication problems with parents, difficulty in adapting to school culture and negative attitudes of classmates.



### Findings Regarding the Fifth Sub-Purpose of the Study

To reach the findings regarding the fifth sub-purpose of the study, the teachers who did not have Syrian students were asked “To what extent do you think these problems would affect other students in your classroom”, and the relevant findings are presented in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** The extent to which the problems likely to be experienced by teachers who do not have Syrian students affect other students in the classroom

Figure 4 illustrates that 59% (f:16) of the teachers, who do not have any Syrian students, think that problems likely to be experienced in the education of Syrian students will affect other students considerably. The rate of teachers who indicate a partial effect is approximately 37% (f:10), and about 4% (f:5) indicate a little impact. None of the teachers (f:0) think that problems likely to be experienced will not affect other students.

### Findings Regarding the Sixth Sub-Purpose of the Study

To reach the findings for the sixth sub-purpose of the study, the solution proposals of the teachers who did not have Syrian students regarding the possible problems in the classroom were identified, and the findings are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Solution proposals of the teachers who do not have Syrian students regarding the possible problems in the classroom**

Theme	Code	Frequency (f)	Total
Language Education	Teaching Syrian students Turkish	13	16
	Improving their Turkish	1	
	Providing Turkish education in different ways	1	
	Providing only Turkish education for one year	1	
Harmonisation activities	Focusing on activities for harmonising with other students	4	13
	Teaching Turkish culture	3	
	Solving adaptation problems through various activities	2	
	Helping parents adopt Turkish culture	2	
	Teaching other students how to harmonise with Syrian students	1	
	Ensuring that teachers embrace students	1	
Academic Measures	Forming separate classes for Syrian students	2	7
	Effective use of the PIKTES project	1	
	Failing students if necessary	1	
	Offering compulsory Turkish lessons	1	
	Reducing class sizes	1	
	Providing education in separate classrooms with Arabic-speaking teachers	1	
Other Measures	Sending refugees back to their countries	2	2

As observed in Table 5, the solutions proposed by the teachers who do not have Syrian students regarding the possible problems in the classroom are grouped under four themes, which are listed as “language education”, “harmonisation activities”, “academic measures”, and “other measures”, respectively.

The most frequently offered solution in the theme of language education is teaching Syrian students Turkish (f:13). Within the scope of the theme of harmonisation activities, the solution suggested the most was focusing on activities harmonising Syrian students with other students (f:4). In the theme of academic measures, the teachers mostly suggest forming separate classrooms for Syrian students (f:2).

Within the scope of the theme of other measures, sending refugees back to their countries (f:2) is the most common solution proposed by the teachers. When all the themes are evaluated overall, it is revealed that the teachers who do not have Syrian students mostly consider teaching Turkish to these students as the best solution to the problems likely to be experienced.

The randomly selected statements of the teachers who do not have Syrian students regarding their opinions on solutions to problems they may experience in the classroom are presented below:

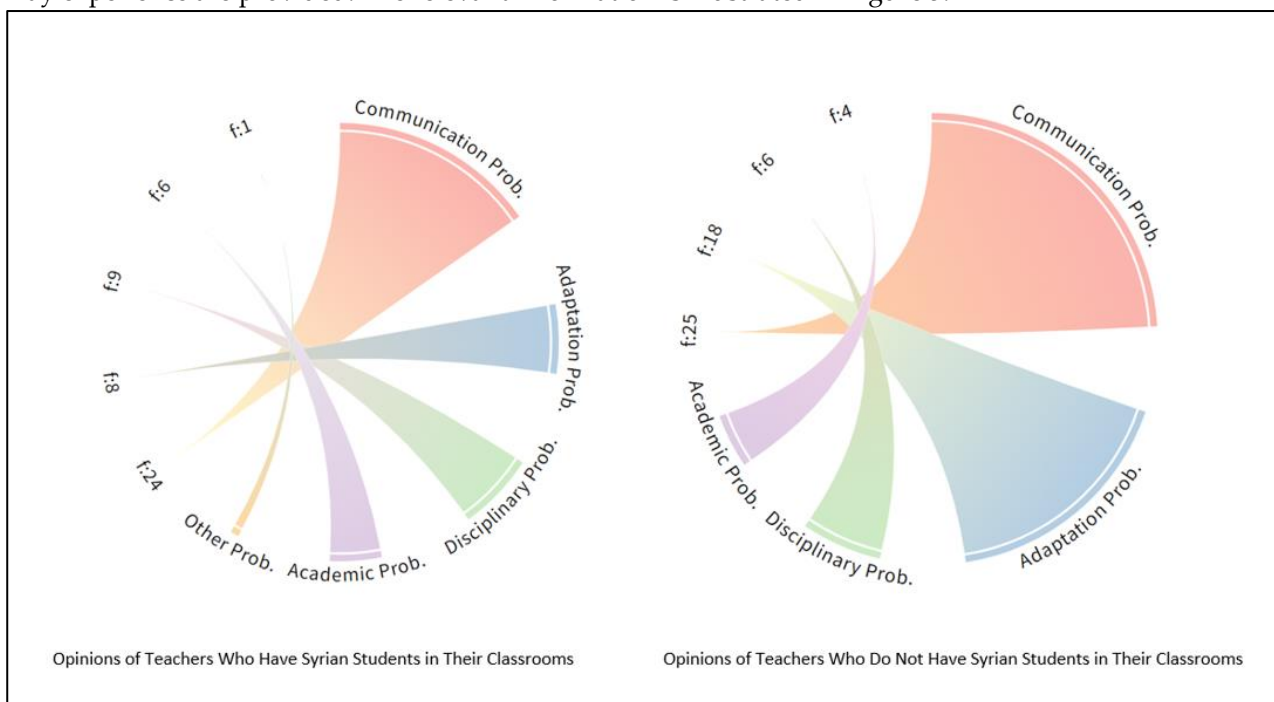
*Teacher 2 Without a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* Primarily focusing on teaching them Turkish to solve the language problem, searching for ways to communicate with parents, and focusing on activities regarding the perspectives of other students.

*Teacher 26 Without a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* As a solution proposal, refugees allowed in the country should continue their education in its normal course after receiving only Turkish education for one year, this may eliminate the problems.

*Teacher 13 Without a Syrian Student in the Classroom:* Turkish education must be provided before Syrian students are included in the classes. Turkish students and Syrian students should be trained to ensure harmony.

**Findings Regarding the Seventh Sub-Purpose of the Study**

To present the findings regarding the seventh sub-purpose of the study, the opinions of the teachers were compared based on the presence of Syrian students in their classrooms, and then the similarities and differences were listed. In this context, the data on the distribution of the problems that teachers experience or may experience are provided. The relevant information is illustrated in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Distributions of the themes including problems that teachers experience or are likely to experience due to the presence of Syrian students in the classroom

When Figure 5 is examined, it is identified that the themes created based on the opinions of the teachers in both groups regarding the problems experienced or likely to be experienced in the classroom have similarities and differences. It is observed that the teachers mostly highlighted communication problems. A noteworthy finding is that adaptation problems were mostly expressed by the teachers who did not have any Syrian students. Moreover, the teachers in both groups expressed similar opinions on academic and disciplinary problems within the scope of the relevant themes. Furthermore, the teachers who had Syrian students indicated a different problem under the theme of other problems.

In line with the findings obtained from the research data, when the problems presented for each theme were addressed separately, it was also identified that there were similarities and differences in the opinions of the teachers in both groups. The relevant data are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Comparison of the problems experienced or likely to be experienced by the teachers based on the presence of Syrian students in the classroom**

Theme	Teachers Who Have Syrian Students			Teachers Who Do Not Have Syrian Students		
	Code	f	Total	Code	f	Total
Communication Problems	Language problems	22	24	Language problems	24	25
	Inability to communicate with parents	2		Problems in communicating with parents	1	
Disciplinary Problems	Disrespect to the teacher and lessons	2	9	Peer bullying	2	6
	Not taking school and lessons seriously	1		Communication-based rage problems	1	
	Distracting the teacher by speaking Arabic in the classroom	1		Exclusion	1	
	Asking for privilege	1		Indiscipline	1	
	Constant dialogue with each other	1		Unrest among students	1	
	Disciplinary problems arising from cultural differences	1				
	Exhibiting behaviours disrupting the flow of the lesson	1				
Indiscipline	1					
Adaptation Problems	Acculturation problems	7	8	Students' adaptation to the class	9	18
	Problems faced in conveying values	1		Acculturation	5	
				Social adaptation	2	
				Adaptation to school culture	1	
Academic Problems	Not doing the homework assigned	1	6	Allocating extra time to Syrian students for individualized education	1	4
	Passing class without learning Turkish	1		Reading and comprehension	1	
	Lack of interest in verbal lessons	1		Difficulty understanding lessons	1	
	Inefficiency in activities in the Turkish language lessons	1				
	Having difficulty understanding lessons	1		Motivating students for lessons	1	
	Turkish illiteracy of some students	1				
Other Problems	Hygiene issues	1	1	-	-	-

When the problems under the themes are examined comparatively according to Table 6, it is observed that the problems faced or likely to be faced by the teachers in both groups in the education of Syrian students mostly regard language problems. Considering the theme of disciplinary problems, the teachers who have Syrian students highlight disrespect to the teacher and lessons, whereas the other group of teachers emphasise the issue of peer bullying that may occur in the classroom. Moreover, it is observed that the teacher groups have different approaches within the scope of adaptation problems. While the teachers who have Syrian students experience culture-related problems with these students, the other teachers think that they may have problems ensuring the adaptation of Syrian students to the class. It is also revealed that the opinions of the teachers in both groups differ regarding academic problems, which is another theme created in line with the findings obtained from the research data. The academic problems experienced by the teachers of Syrian students include not doing the homework assigned, passing class without learning Turkish, having difficulty in understanding lessons, lack of interest in verbal lessons, Turkish illiteracy of some students, and inefficiency in the activities carried out in the Turkish language lessons. The academic problems considered likely by the

teachers having no Syrian students include difficulty in understanding lessons and motivating Syrian students for lessons. They also express that the instruction of Syrian students may require more time than other students in lessons. In addition, the teachers who have Syrian students also highlight the problem of hygiene under the theme of other problems.

Another issue examined within the scope of the seventh sub-purpose of the study is the opinions of the teachers in both groups about the extent to which the aforementioned problems affect other students in the classroom. The relevant data are presented in Figure 6.

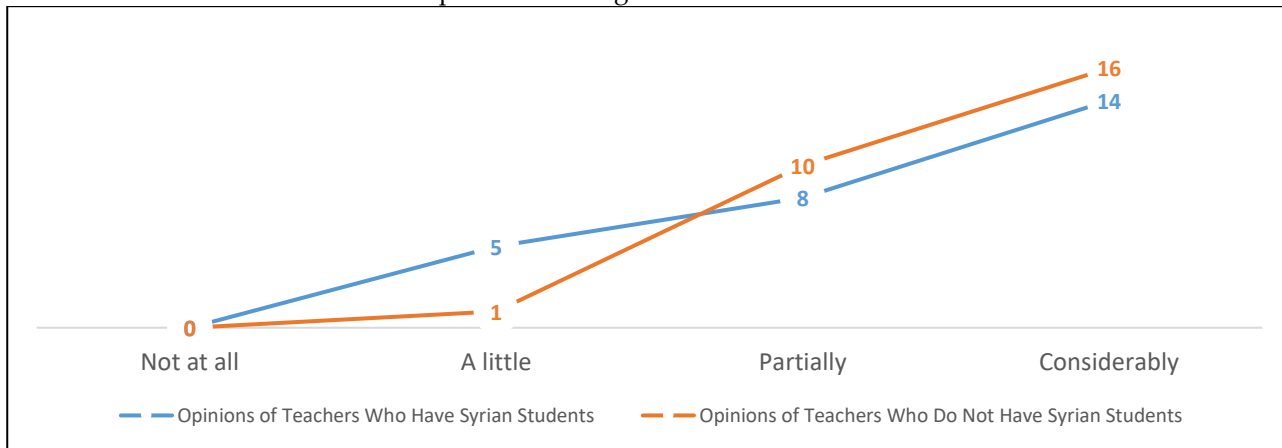


Figure 6. The extent to which the problems arising from the presence of Syrian students as indicated by teachers affect other students in the classroom

When the data presented in Figure 6 are examined comparatively, it is observed that the opinions of the teachers in both groups are mostly parallel. All the teachers think that the problems in the education of Syrian students will adversely affect other students in the classroom. None of the teachers states that the relevant problems will have no impact.

The last issue examined in line with the relevant sub-purpose is the solution proposals of the teachers in both groups for the problems indicated. In this context, the themes created to represent the opinions of the teachers are presented comparatively in Figure 7.

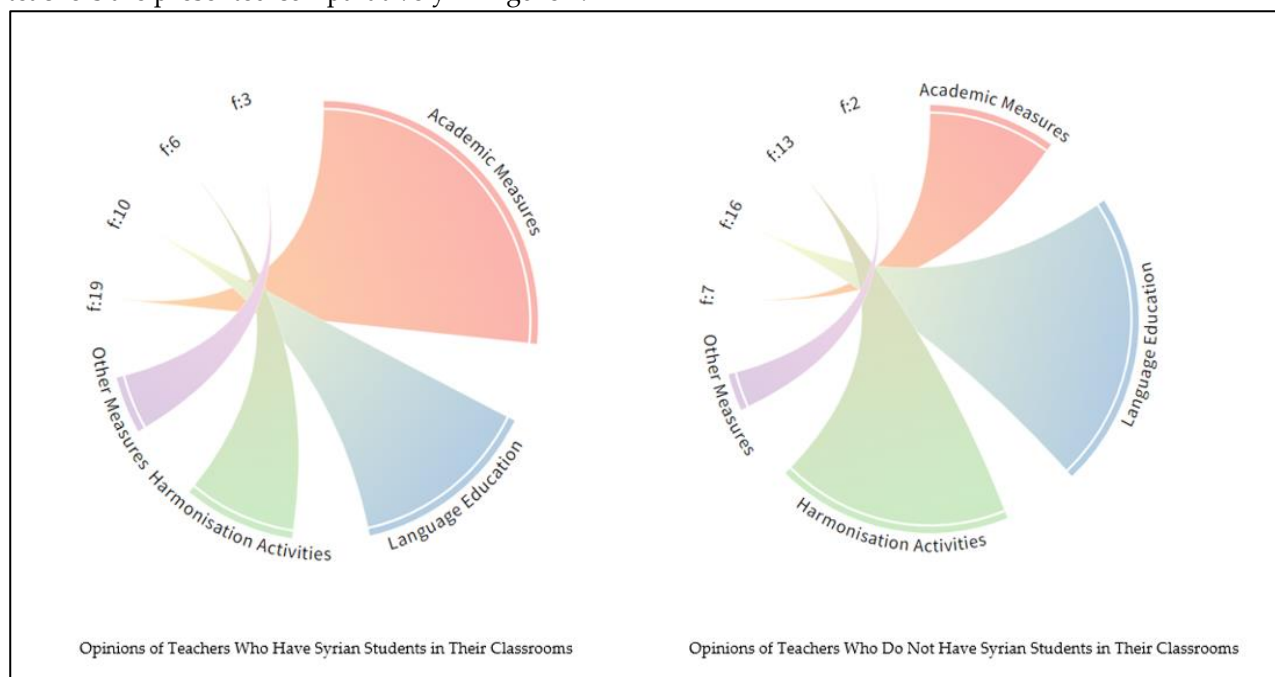


Figure 7. The theme-based distribution of the teachers' solution proposals for the problems experienced or likely to be experienced due to the presence of Syrian students in the classroom

When Figure 7 is examined comparatively, it is observed that the teachers who have Syrian students mostly present their solution proposals within the framework of academic measures and language education, whereas the other group of teachers offer solutions regarding language education and harmonisation activities. The teachers in both groups offer a similar number of solutions within the scope of other measures.

The solution proposals presented for the problems under each theme were examined comparatively, and it was revealed that there were similarities and differences in the opinions of the teachers in both groups. The relevant data are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7. Comparison of the solution proposals of the teachers for the problems arising from the presence of Syrian students in the classroom**

Theme	Teachers Who Have Syrian Students			Teachers Who Do Not Have Syrian Students		
	Code	f	Total	Code	f	Total
Academic Measures	Educating Syrian students in separate classrooms	5	19	Forming separate classes for Syrian students	2	7
	Not allowing students to pass the class without learning Turkish	5		Failing students if necessary	1	
	Limiting the number of Syrian students in the classroom	2		Offering compulsory Turkish lessons	1	
	Assigning Arabic-speaking teachers	2		Providing education in separate classrooms with Arabic-speaking teachers	1	
	Ensuring that they start education from kindergarten	1		Effective use of the PIKTES project	1	
	Not including them in the compulsory education	1		Reducing class sizes	1	
	Abolishing Foreign Student Exam (YÖS)	1		Teaching Syrian students Turkish	13	
	Assigning Arabic-speaking assistants to classes	1		Improving their Turkish	1	
	Providing a good basic education	1		Providing Turkish education in different ways	1	
Language Education	Ensuring that Syrian students learn Turkish	9	10	Providing only Turkish education for one year	1	16
	Providing Arabic education for teachers	1		Focusing on activities for harmonising with other students	4	
	Teaching Turkish culture to Syrian students	4		Teaching Turkish culture	3	
Harmonisation Activities	Increasing communication between teachers and parents	1	6	Solving adaptation problems through various activities	2	13
	Ensuring cooperation among the Ministry, school administration, teachers, parents and students	1		Making parents adopt Turkish culture	2	
	Teaching Turkish culture to Syrian students	4		Teaching other students how to harmonise with Syrian students	1	
	Increasing communication between teachers and parents	1		Ensuring that teachers embrace students	1	
Other Measures	Sending refugees back to their countries	2	3	Sending refugees back to their countries	2	2
	Preventing privileges	1				

When the solution proposals under the themes are examined comparatively in Table 7, it is observed that the solution proposals of the teachers who have Syrian students within the scope of the academic measures theme mostly regard educating Syrian students in separate classrooms excluded from Turkish students and not allowing students to pass class without learning Turkish. Similarly, the teachers who do not have Syrian students suggest forming separate classes for the education of Syrian students. Within the scope of language education, the teachers in both groups have similar opinions and think that Syrian students must learn Turkish. Considering harmonisation activities, the comparison of the teacher opinions indicates partial differences. In this respect, the teachers who have Syrian students mostly suggest that these children should be educated to adapt to the Turkish culture, while the other teachers primarily recommend ensuring the harmonisation of Syrian students with other students in the classroom, and secondly educating Syrian students on the Turkish culture. The solution offered the most by the teachers in both groups within the scope

of the other measures is sending refugees back to their countries. What is different in this theme is that the teachers having Syrian students also suggest preventing the privileges given to Syrian children.

## **RESULT, DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study aims to examine the problems experienced or likely to be experienced by teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms and teachers who have never been involved in educational activities with Syrian students and to identify the similarities and differences in the opinions of the teachers in both groups. For this purpose, the data collection tool developed within the scope of the study was administered to the study group, and the findings were presented comparatively.

In this context, the teachers in both groups were first asked for their opinions on the problems experienced and likely to be experienced in the education of Syrian students, and it was concluded that the teachers included in the study group mostly highlighted the problem of language within the scope of communication problems. In the majority of the studies conducted on the subject, communication problem is indicated as the most common problem that teachers face in the education of Syrian students (Çelik, 2019; Özenç & Saat, 2019; Sözer & Işiker, 2021; Silgan, 2022). Similarly, Aytaç (2021) has identified in his meta-analysis research that language problem is among the most frequent problems in the education process of Syrian children in the studies examined. Similar studies that support the research findings are also encountered in the foreign literature (Almadani, 2018; Hadid & Hos, 2021). What is noteworthy in this study is that the teachers who do not have any Syrian students highlight the language problem as do the teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms. Another significant issue is that language is still indicated as the most common problem by the teachers involved in the education of Syrian students even though it has been twelve years since the Syrian civil war broke out and almost all of these children were born in Türkiye considering that the study group consists of primary school teachers. Additionally, a study has revealed that the academic characteristics of Syrian students are affected by their proficiency in the Turkish language (Bal, Cavkaytar, Artar & Uluyol, 2021). In this context, considering that language is the most common problem in the education of Syrian children, the academic competence of these children also becomes a matter of discussion. Following the language problem, the teachers with Syrian students in their classes indicated mostly having disciplinary problems, while the teachers who did not have any Syrian students considered adaptation problems more likely. It can thus be stated that the opinions of the teachers in the study group are different in this respect. However, relevant research provides data that support both groups. Demir, Özdemir, and Köse (2020) present in their study that there have been some changes in the disciplinary problems at primary education levels with the inclusion of Syrian students in the Turkish education system. Likewise, some studies have revealed some adaptation problems (Ertekin, 2019; Sözer & Işiker, 2021; Silgan 2022). Consequently, for a healthier conclusion, it is considered important to include details on how disciplinary problems and adaptation problems are defined by the teachers in both groups. When the data were examined in detail concerning discipline problems, it was concluded that the teachers who had Syrian students mostly had problems of disrespect to lessons and themselves, while the teachers with no Syrian students in their classes expressed that peer bullying could be a common problem leading to other disciplinary problems. Under the theme of adaptation problems, the teachers who had Syrian students indicated having culture-related adaptation problems, whereas the other group of teachers considered the adaptation of Syrian children to the classroom as a possible problem. As for the theme of academic problems, the teachers in both groups had different opinions. While the teachers with Syrian students in their classrooms mostly referred to academic problems in teaching Turkish and its effects on lessons, the other group thought that there might be problems in motivating these kids for lessons and allocating them more time than other children during lessons. Another finding obtained from the research includes the opinions of the teachers in both groups on how the problems experienced and likely to be experienced affect other students in the classroom. In this context, it can be stated that both groups of teachers have similar opinions. They all think that the problems experienced in the classroom will have adverse effects on other students. Another study conducted on this subject has also revealed that students in the classroom are negatively affected by Syrian children's poor psychology, violation of classroom rules, and lack of hygiene (Emiroğlu, 2018). These findings support the results of the present study.

Another issue examined within the scope of the study is the solution proposals of the teachers in both groups for the problems experienced due to the presence of Syrian students in their classrooms. According to the research results, the teachers in both groups have different solution proposals. The teachers who had

Syrian students mostly suggested solutions within the scope of language education and academic measures, and the other group of teachers offered solutions regarding language education and harmonisation activities. When the opinions of the teachers regarding the solution proposals were examined comparatively within the scope of the themes created, it was concluded that the academic measures suggested by the teachers in both groups included educating Syrian students in separate classes excluded from Turkish students. Several other studies also present findings that the education of Syrian students should be provided in separate classes (Bal, Cavkaytar, Artar & Uluyol, 2021; Emiroğlu, 2018). Considering the theme of language education, the solution proposals of the teachers in both groups were found to be similar. The teachers suggested that Syrian students should learn Turkish. Alkalay, Kiral and Erdem (2021) also emphasise the necessity of providing language education as a “priority” to solve the problems experienced in the education of Syrian children. Within the scope of harmonisation activities, the teachers who had Syrian students in their classes mainly argued that these students should be trained to adapt to Turkish culture, while the other group of teachers mostly suggested ensuring Syrian students’ harmony with other students in the classroom. It is observed that the relevant research results mostly regard providing solutions to ensure the harmony of children in the classroom with each other (Emiroğlu, 2018; Memduhoğlu & Kultaş, 2020). Considering the theme of other measures in the study, it was concluded that the teachers in both groups offered to send refugees back to their countries. Similarly, in the study by Alkalay, Kiral and Erdem (2021), primary school teachers and administrators suggest that refugee students should be sent back to their countries.

When the research results are evaluated in general, it is observed that the problems faced by teachers who have Syrian students in their classrooms and their solution proposals for these problems are similar to the results obtained in previous studies in the literature. Considering that it has been twelve years since the Syrian civil war broke out, it can be stated that these problems are still experienced today, and solutions similar to those in previous studies are offered for these problems. What is noteworthy here is that the teachers who have never been involved in educational activities with Syrian students have presented highly rational findings similar to the results in the literature regarding the possible problems and their solutions. In this respect, it can be inferred that teachers who do not have Syrian students in their classrooms have a high level of awareness. As a result of all these evaluations, it is primarily recommended that the practices adopted to teach Turkish to Syrian students should be evaluated and made more effective. Besides, it is necessary to increase the efficiency of the orientation activities that involve Syrian parents and help Syrian children adapt to Turkish culture and peers. In this context, it is recommended that informative content should be developed for children and parents on various platforms. Another recommendation based on the research results is the introduction of a quota for the number of Syrian students in a classroom. It is believed that this practice will yield positive results for Syrian students to learn Turkish.

#### **LIMITATIONS and FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The current study is limited to primary school teachers' views on the education of Syrian students in Turkey. Therefore, further research can be conducted to examine the views of different stakeholders on the subject. Based on the results of this study, action research can be conducted to address the challenges faced by primary school teachers in the education of Syrian children. Such a study may provide more insights to overcome the challenges faced by teachers.

#### **Declarations**

#### **Conflict of Interest**

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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#### **Research and Publication Ethics Statement**

I consciously assure that ethical rules have been followed in this study and that the requirements of the article have been fulfilled as the author:

- This material is the author own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the author own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.

- All sources used are properly disclosed.

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