

## Consequences of Immigration for Families: Structure, Culture, and Relationships

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**Abstract:** Qualitative research, including in-depth interviews with adults and drawings by children, was used to examine and evaluate changes and transformations in the family structures of immigrants living in Denizli and Aydın after migrating to Turkey because of political pressure and war. The research involved eight immigrant parents and 14 elementary school students. Despite limitations in scope and number of participants, this study was designed to contribute to the literature. Its findings show that although immigrants are satisfied and happy with their migration to Turkey, they have endured some negative effects. Some of these negative effects are unemployment, language barrier, being away from their home country, and also migration hurts immigrants economically, bringing with it negative social effects on immigrants' status and economic class.

**Keywords:** immigrant, family structure, family relations, children, parents

From the dawn of human history, migration has been a reality, significant because it ultimately allows people to freely practice their religion, speak their native tongue, and flee persecution and death. People or communities relocate, either permanently or temporarily, from one place to another for a variety of reasons, including natural disasters, political pressure, economic hardship, armed conflict, civil war, or regime change. Although migration is often defined as movement or displacement, it is more than that. The process of migration comprises economic, cultural, social, and other implications impacting the social structure; consequently, it must be assessed holistically.

Economic activity may slow down or perhaps cease in situations where political events jeopardize the security of people's lives and property. In these situations, large numbers of people attempting to flee to safe locations quit their jobs, decreasing production to the detriment of the home nation's economy. Migration affects not only the immigrants and their home nation but also the transit and destination nations. Migration-related displacement involves spatial and cultural shifts, with political, social, and psychological changes affecting both the immigrants and the host nation (Dağışan & Aydın, 2017).

One nation that welcomes immigrants from other countries is Turkey, often a transit nation because it is on the migrant path and serves as a bridge between Asia and Europe. Transit migrants, including refugees, often experience prolonged stays in transit countries before resettlement or onward migration. Research indicates that many transit migrants spend more than a few years in transit, awaiting resettlement or seeking alternative migration options. For instance, a report by UNHCR (2016) highlights that the average duration of stay for refugees in transit can extend beyond initial expectations, with some individuals spending several years in limbo. The protracted

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nature of transit migration can lead some migrants to reassess their plans, resulting in decisions to stay in the transit country rather than continue their journey. They are sometimes unaware of what their final route will be, as these may depend on, and indeed be modified by a multitude of factors, including border patrol presence, amount of funds, and the creation of 'spontaneous social networks,' weather conditions, smugglers or traffickers' itineraries (Kuschminder et al., 2015; Kuschminder & Waidler, 2020). Because of its geographical location, Turkey has been and still is affected by migratory flows resulting from upheavals in other countries. A statement from the Directorate of Migration Management indicated that as of July 16, 2023, a total of 4,893,752 immigrants resided in Turkey, a figure based on the most recent data available. Turkey has been impacted by internal political concerns due to its geographic location; nevertheless, it has welcomed millions of immigrants and adopted a humanitarian migration policy. In contrast to many European nations, Turkey has given immigrants numerous rights and thoroughly invested in services for them.

Despite Turkey's best efforts, immigrants still experience many difficulties in their quest to feel safe and secure. In particular, the challenging process of migration may cause economic problems as well as issues with language learning or cultural and psychological adjustment for immigrants who must migrate; furthermore, immigrants and their families may separate from life sources, routines, and long-held values as a result of the effects of migration. In a study of the effect of migration on the dynamics of immigrant families once they relocated to Turkey, Ekmen and Koçak (2020) demonstrated effects on participants' housing, health, sociocultural, educational, and economic spheres of life, leading to adjustments and alterations in the structures of participant families in terms of role distribution, type, duties, and interactions with the environment.

At an earlier time in Turkey, migration was considered temporary; however, war has made it a permanent condition. Consequently, many studies have been conducted on migration in Turkey, focusing primarily on the integration of Syrian refugees (Apak, 2014; Aslan & Güngör, 2019; Bimay, 2020; Duğan & Gürbüz, 2018; Erdoğan, 2015; Harunoğulları, 2016); however, few of them were focused on changes in the family dynamics of refugees or immigrants. A literature review has shown that migration researchers have paid little attention to changes in the family, specifically family roles, resulting from migration (Waters & Yeuh, 2023). The resultant lack of information motivated this study.

Qualitative research methods were used in this study to examine and evaluate the changes and transformations in the family structures of irregular migrants who live in Denizli and Aydın after migrating to Turkey as a result of war and political pressure. The research involved interviews with eight immigrant parents and the drawings of 14 elementary school students. However, limited in terms of its scope and participants, this study may be, it was designed to contribute to the literature.

## **Literature Review**

Migration involves far more than a single nation or government; it is an international phenomenon accompanied by problems as well as numerous cultural, political, social, medical, psychological, and artistic changes that transform the sending country, host country, and the family itself as shown in the following sections (Dağaşan & Aydın, 2017).

## **Effects on Sending Country**

Migration, which is a movement from developing to developed countries, has positive and negative effects on the sending country (Yılmaz, 2014). Despite breaking their connection to it, immigrants living abroad send money to their home country and make investments that foster its development. Immigrants learn about other countries' educational systems, gain new knowledge from work and social environments, and transfer new ideas to their home country. With the change and transfer of new attitudes, behaviors, and thoughts, cultural change occurs. These changes and newly learned abilities can facilitate transformation in the political and economic structure of the sending country and produce new developments in its health and educational systems (Chimhowu et al., 2005).

Migration also has negative effects on the sending country. Inequalities might exist among the people who have income from abroad and those who do not; furthermore, immigrants do not always experience positive cultural acquisitions, and they transfer negative acquisitions to their home country (Chimhowu et al., 2005). Additionally, remittances sent back to the sending country may create dependence and discourage investment in local industries, further exacerbating economic disparities. According to recent studies (Smith & Edmonds, 2023), the outflow of skilled professionals can impede innovation and technological advancement in the sending country, perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment. Brain drain is another negative effect of migration on the sending country. Among migrated people are qualified engineers and other professionals as well as workers who excel at their jobs and those with much experience. The net loss of qualified and educated people is detrimental to the sending country.

## **Effects on the Host Country**

Just as it affects the sending country, migration also affects the host country and its people (Sayın et al., 2016). Over time, immigrants open businesses and factories, ultimately contributing to the host country's economy. Not only do they produce and consume in these countries, but they also socialize with people around them and transfer their own culture to them while learning the culture of the host country. The result is cultural exchange and acculturation, during which both negative and positive acquisitions can, nevertheless, be transferred.

Problems may arise between immigrants and locals. If integration problems occur, immigrants can stubbornly oppose locals and vice versa. If the migration policy has not been implemented correctly and inspections have not been conducted effectively, the immigrant population may find itself underpaid and without insurance (Ekmen & Koçak, 2020). By contrast, free services for immigrants might result in a high cost to the host country, causing locals to respond negatively to immigrants (Karakaya, 2020). In addition, those who live outside migrant camps might experience an increase in housing rent or food prices as consumption increases (Oytun & Senyücel Gündoğar, 2015).

## **Effects on Immigrants**

Regardless of arriving from another nation on a forced or voluntary basis, immigrants typically leave their old lives behind and adapt to the new culture and environment. They must pass through an extensive integration process in the host country, facing issues like accommodation, language, health, education, and employment, as well as socioeconomic, political, and cultural interactions (Barın, 2023; Fielden, 2008). On the psychological level, maintaining identity can also

be a problem for immigrants (Miao et al., 2018). Adaptation issues might vary depending on an array of factors, such as immigrant identities, migration types, host countries and regions, host cultures, and experiences in the host country, and the issues may arise at any time during the decision-making stage before the migration, the migration process itself, or the challenging postmigration period. According to Segal and Watkins (2008),

*immigrant adaptation in a new country reflects the interplay of the reasons for leaving the homeland, the experience of migration, the tangible and intangible resources for functioning in unfamiliar environments, and the effects of the host country's receptivity (both politically and socially) to the immigrant presence (p. 217).*

They noted that the journeys of immigrants are impacted by an array of harrowing experiences that can have a negative psychological and social impact even though they may be unaware of that impact; furthermore, if one family member is impacted by the migration process, then all family members will be impacted.

An increase in immigrants has occurred at Turkey's borders each year. In 2023, the number of immigrants in Turkey is approximately 4 million (Barın, 2023). Normally, when people cross the border, they cannot immediately acquire Turkish culture. According to Segal and Watkins' (2008) summary of the migration experience, why immigrants left their home countries, how they experienced the migration process, how they responded to foreign environments, and how the host country adjusted to them are all issues of concern. Most immigrants depart their native lands and homes with little preparation and with few possessions, often experiencing abuse and persecution and seeing their lives destroyed or taken from them.

When adjusting to a new society, immigrants and refugees frequently face prejudice and discrimination when entering a new country because of their clothes, their accents, or the color of their skin. Okten Sipahioğlu's (2023) study highlighted "the negative labeling of refugees and the discrimination against them according to their race and ethnicity" (p. 197). In some of the studies, it is clear that refugee youth may face discrimination based on their country of origin, culture, skin color, race, or ethnicity (Demir & Ozgul, 2019; Guo et al., 2019). The majority of immigrants manage to make a living and raise their families in the host country despite challenges like prejudice and extremely low resources. Demir and Ozgul (2019) stated that many youths had to get a job at an early age to earn money to look after their families. Their participants talked about financial problems and discrimination they encountered. Most of them claimed that inequalities exist in the workplace between Turkish and Syrian workers, and they were discriminated against because of their Syrian background. Whenever immigration is linked to criminality and security, these thousands of people become hyper-visible and blamed for being extremely dangerous to society (Okten Sipahioğlu, 2023). In addition to the discrimination, immigrants may face social isolation, linguistic obstacles, and cultural differences, yet many immigrants or refugees overcome the hardships and trauma associated with moving to a new and strange society and culture. The literature establishes discrimination as a significant stressor in the lives of refugee youth that impacts their well-being, which is consistent with cultural-developmental models that highlight discrimination as a pivotal factor that affects children's adaptation (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the psychological effects of what immigrants encounter during the adaptation process may have an impact on their own lives and those of their family members.

*Challenges that migration brings into the family life can have negative effects on the family resources in child-rearing. These effects may be exacerbated if parents are new to the country or experience problems with social integration, which might result from language barriers and lack of educational resources. (Kolancı & Melhuish, 2023, p. 84)*

Their relationships with others, especially with family members, may suffer as a result of their stress, trauma, or alienation. Family cohesiveness or structure may be damaged by this; however, few theories or research on immigrants focus on their families. The aim of this study was, therefore, to concentrate on the family relationships and structures of immigrant families as well as any effects that the immigration process may have on them.

### **Effects on Immigrant Families**

Within families experiencing trauma due to migration, without exception, everyone, including children, adolescents, women, men, adults, and elders, has been affected on a variety of levels by this process, leading to the restructuring of families after migration (Bimay & Çetin, 2023). Thus, depending on how effective the origin culture is for immigrant families, the process of adaptation and belonging is more difficult for them after migration (Bimay, 2020).

Immigrating individuals and families are exposed to influences that can alter their family structures, detaching them from some of the values, attitudes, and life sources identified with their previous lives as a result of economic, social, and cultural changes brought on by migration (Cesur Kılıçaslan, 2006). A family is a group; thus, its society—or unity—can be impacted by migration in terms of interfamily communication, the division of roles within the family, the process of family decision-making, and family relationships with the neighborhood. The migration process, which might affect the social value system under which they previously operated, determines and shapes the existent institutional behaviors and values once again (Jabbar & Zaza, 2014).

In addition, migration can alter the roles of women and other members of the family as a community. The process of migration often necessitates adjustments in traditional gender roles and familial dynamics, particularly in societies where patriarchal structures are prevalent. Women may assume new responsibilities, both within the household and in the workforce, as a result of the absence of male family members who have migrated for employment opportunities. Conversely, in some cases, women themselves may become migrants, leading to shifts in caregiving responsibilities and decision-making power within the family unit. Recent research (Khan & Rahman, 2022) highlights the complex interplay between migration and gender dynamics, emphasizing the need for policies and support systems that recognize and address the evolving roles of women and family members in migrant communities.

Family dynamics may be impacted by these changes; furthermore, changes in family structures, such as the transition from an extended family to a nuclear family, a patriarchal family to an egalitarian family, or a nuclear family to a fragmented family, can result from migration or interactions between societies after migration. In summary, migration has an impact on family finances and income, education, housing, health, social, and cultural life. Moreover, change can occur in interfamily communications, relationships with the environment, interfamily responsibilities, the distribution of family roles, social life, clothing, and eating and drinking habits, transforming family structures (Dumon, 1989).

## Case and Methodology

This study was designed to increase understanding of the changes and effects of immigration on the dynamics of the families involved. It included qualitative research, especially well-suited to understanding how families assess and manage change (Knafl & Gilliss, 2002). I found qualitative research was the optimal method because it “is a type of research that [facilitates exploration] and provides deeper insights into real-world problems” (Tenny et al., 2023, p 37.). I aimed to discover immigrant families’ perceptions, experiences, and feelings; and a qualitative study helped to obtain detailed data. To explore the family dynamics of immigrants who migrated to Turkey, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with eight irregular migrants who settled in Aydin and Denizli provinces. “In-depth interviewing allows researchers to explore in detail people’s subjective experiences, biography, and assumptions” (Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021, p. 1). The purposes of in-depth interviews are to understand someone’s experiences on their own terms, to acquire a sense of the context of a person’s experiences, and to grasp their world and worldview and how they might shape knowledge and meaning. In addition to interviews, children’s drawings supported the data. Fourteen elementary students participated in the study with their drawings. Elementary school children were chosen because studies have shown that the degree to which children are directly affected by migration is related to their age and the features of their new environment. For children aged 6–14, not only is adaptation to the host country more difficult than for those aged 1–5, but they also want to return to their own country after a while (Doğan, 1990).

Participants for the interviews were recruited according to attainability because some immigrants do not know Turkish or English, and communicating with them is difficult. In addition, some immigrants fear speaking with Turkish people, thinking that anyone can be a police officer and that they can find themselves in trouble. Thus, in participant selection, quota sampling was used. “While snowball sampling can be a useful non-probability sampling strategy, its effectiveness is often based on the selection of the initial participants and the degree to which those participants are theoretically random” (Bernt, 2020, p. 226). The first participant was a coworker of my spouse. After deciding on the first participant, he was asked to help find other participants. A strategy in which existing participants recruit future participants from among others they know, snowball sampling is often used with populations difficult to recruit (Bernt, 2020). Student participants were chosen with quota sampling, which is “based on identifying strata with shared or unique characteristics of the population and selecting persons proportionate to the population” (Bernt, 2020, p. 226). The criteria I defined for the child participants were as follows: ages 6 through 10 and the ability to understand possibilities for their future. A friend of mine, a teacher at an elementary school in Denizli, selected the student participants. Quota sampling was quicker and easier to conduct than stratified sampling because random sampling was not used.

A four-member team conducted the interviews. The team comprised a female professor, a male graduate student, and two men who could access the participants. A graduate student conducted the interviews while the two men reached out and chose participants for the study. The two men are immigrants who are working in the same place as the husband of the researcher. Several steps were taken to ensure the reliability of information across interviewers and the validity of information generally. The team met weekly while interviews were conducted to discuss new information or perspectives that arose during the interviews that week. Then, new questions were added to the interview schedule to determine whether the new information was affirmed or shared by other interviewees. Also, some questions that participants could not understand were deleted. Thus, we were able to confirm the validity of the information as the interviews progressed.

We ensured anonymity to encourage interview participants to speak freely without fear of reprisal. Participants provided their age, marital status, and gender, but the interviewees were given pseudonyms (Ragin, 1994). At the end of each interview, interviewees were asked whether they would like to share anything else; many responded enthusiastically with more information.

Interviews were conducted in Turkish and translated into English by the professor on the team. In one of the interviews, the team used a translator because the participant's Turkish was insufficient to understand the interview questions. Each interview generally lasted 25 to 30 minutes, and respondents were asked open-ended questions. To avoid the systematic bias that can develop if one topic always follows another specific issue, interviewers changed the sequence of the questions. We encouraged participants to share stories that they believed to be particularly noteworthy. All interviews were guided by semi-structured questions, but the conversations took a variety of shapes. "Semi-structured interviews are interviews that follow a set of questions, allowing some flexibility in how questions are asked, and provide the researcher with the opportunity to ask clarifying and follow-up questions" (Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021, p.105). Valentine (2005) suggested that starting questions with the phrase "tell me about" can be an effective way of encouraging discussion because it is less inquisitorial and also reminds participants of the interviewers' interest in what they have to share. These principles guided the shaping of the questions. Follow-up questions were used to delve more deeply into concepts unaddressed by our set of questions: Interviewers recognized the importance of sensitive probing to follow up and explore the issues raised during the interview (Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021). Interviewees' marital status, number of children, location of residence, similarities and differences between families in Turkey and their home country, gender roles, childrearing, and means the interviewees' families used to make ends meet were all topics covered in the structured questions on the family. I determined all semi-structured and follow-up questions after a careful examination of the literature. Once the questions were written, the opinions of two more experts were obtained. Ultimately, all three experts convened to decide on the interview questions.

Each interview was recorded on tape, followed by transcription and translation into English. All interview segments about family (either as responses to explicit questions regarding family or addressed in response to other questions) were organized and retrieved using the computer program ATLAS/ti for Windows. These sections of the interview transcript were then categorized.

In addition to in-depth parent interviews, another qualitative research design called visual phenomenology was applied in this study. According to Groose et al. (2021), visual phenomenology is based on the interpretation and assessment of the meanings that people construct for a phenomenon, situation, or event by organizing them from a visual perspective. The current study included 14 immigrant children aged 8–12 years living in a province in eastern Turkey. The reason for including children in the 8–12 age group in the study was that a child starts to explore the relationships between drawing, thinking, and reality from the age of 4 (Halmatov, 2020). A purposeful sampling method was used in which my friend, the elementary school teacher, selected students who could and were willing to participate in the study after discussing it with other teachers.

Children were asked to draw a picture of their family and a picture of migration. They were asked to draw two pictures; however, because these children were very young when they migrated to Turkey, they could not draw the latter. Thus, they were asked to draw a picture of their family and color it. Their teachers supervised the activity. None of the research team contacted them to avoid triggering their fear of talking with a stranger. Teachers wrote only the age and gender of the children on their pictures to maintain anonymity and to assure the reliability of the study.

## **Ethical Considerations**

After obtaining approval from the Ethics Committee of Pamukkale University, participants were chosen by snowball sampling. After selection, they were all asked whether their participation was voluntary. Upon agreement, they signed the consent forms. The objectives and characteristics of the research were explained to the parents and children both verbally and in writing, emphasizing their voluntary involvement, confidentiality, and the anonymity of the data. Children and families provided informed agreement for the publication of their images. The researcher took the children's drawings with their consent and kept them.

## **Analytic Procedures**

Textual coding and analysis were carried out with ATLAS/ti and accepted practices for qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Based on in-depth interviews, a "start list" of 21 descriptive codes was developed. The query tool of ATLAS/ti was used to carry out pattern coding to create smaller sets, themes, and constructs (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The link between codes was examined using pattern coding. For instance, seven quotations were discovered when the query tool was used to search for passages including the words "war," "communication," or "family." Next, I summarized the meanings of quotations with brief descriptive sentences based on pattern-coded quotations, using a technique known as memoing.

## **Results**

The results section is divided into two parts reflecting the data collection, which involved parent interviews and children's drawings. The parent interviews revealed six distinct spheres of family life emerging from a thorough review of all the coded statements: (a) reasons for migration, (b) adaptation process, (c) family standard of living, (d) family interactions, (e) family roles, and (f) changes in family structure. Numerous negative effects and beneficial family reactions were listed for each of these areas. According to the investigation, family members consistently linked beneficial family methods to the negative changes brought on by war and genocide. As a result, the following detailed presentation of the results has been divided into these six categories of family life. Each part covers an aspect of family life and includes quotations from family members discussing both negative changes and constructive reactions.

### **Parent Interviews**

Six themes emerging from the parent interviews are detailed below.

#### ***Reasons for Migration***

When the participants were asked the reason for their migration to Turkey, their answers revealed two categories: taking risks and war.

**Taking Risks for the Children and Economic Improvement.** Two couples stated that they left their country for their children's sake. One couple said that they lived in Iran, the mother's home country, but because the father was Afghan, the Iranian government did not grant citizenship



to their children. Thus, they decided to live in another country. In short, they migrated for the children's future. Another couple whose home country was Iran also stated that they came to Turkey for their children's sake. Seeing Turkey as a bridge to another country, these people applied to migrate to a European country and awaited a response. The woman said

*We applied six months ago, and they interviewed us last month. We don't know what is going to happen. If [the application] is approved, we will go to a European country; otherwise, we will get back to our country, but we do not want to do that.*

In addition, some participants whose home country was Afghanistan said that they migrated because of economic hardship. In their country, they lived in poverty, but in Turkey, government assistance was available. An Afghan man said, "The Turkish government is helping us, giving us money and other things. We are in good shape here."

**War.** All participants who migrated from Syria stated that they had run away from the war at home. They had to leave their country to avoid death. One of them said, "My kids still remember bombings and getting up at night crying. We are trying to forget those days."

### ***Adaptation Process***

Even though all participants voluntarily migrated to Turkey, they had some problems adapting to a new environment. Every member of the family had a personal adaptation process.

**Parents.** Parents, especially fathers, experienced more difficulties than other members of the family. Some mothers also had trouble adapting to a new environment, to Turkey and its culture. The preeminent problem was language. Almost all participants stated something along the following lines: "We had many difficult times when we initially arrived in Turkey." One woman said, "We were very anxious because we did not know Turkish or anything about the country. When lost, we could not even ask anybody how to get home." Women's use of the Turkish language was better than men's. One woman's husband spoke no Turkish, and another woman's husband could speak some words but could not understand when spoken to in Turkish.

Participants also pointed out differences in culture. Some stated, "In our country, we care about visiting each other, especially extended families, but here we see little visiting taking place." One woman said, "People here don't visit each other much; we visit each other more. Thus, I mostly visit my relatives." Because participants had few Turkish friends and did not visit each other often, they had no cultural problems.

**Children.** The adaptation process was easier for the children than for their parents because they went to school and made friends with Turkish children, learning the Turkish language faster than their parents. As Dogutas (2020) stated, "child's socialization starts within the family and inner circle, but later it continues at school" (p. 84). Schools made it easier for children to adapt to the new society and language. Learning the language made adaptation easier; in fact, their parents said the children were little Turks. Being young and learning a language quickly helped them adapt to a new culture and country easily.

### ***Family Standard of Living***

All participants experienced difficult times in their home countries and decided to leave for several reasons. The analysis showed that migration changed their families' standard of living.

**Not Better Economic Conditions but a Better Lifestyle.** Most of the participants stated that they did not necessarily enjoy better economic conditions in Turkey than in their home country, but they said that they had better lifestyles. In other words, they had a better standard of living for their children. One couple said, “We had more money in our country than here, but our kids were unhappy, and we were unhappy.” One woman from Syria also stated, “My family has a better life here than in our country.”

Another man stated that he had two cars and one home in his home country, and whenever a new phone was on sale, he bought it. In Turkey, however, he had used the same phone for three years. But he said, “It is okay. I may not have the money to be able to buy a new phone, but my family is happy.”

Some participants planned to migrate to a European country and saw Turkey as a bridge to better lives. Thus, one said, “Right now, we don’t have a good life standard; however, when we move to another country and settle down, we will have a better life.”

Another participant stated, “We don’t have a very good standard of living right now, but we will have it when we settle down in here Turkey. We will learn Turkish, have good jobs, and our kids will be good at school.”

**Safety.** All participants experienced some kind of violence in their home country, so they found Turkey safer than their own country. Especially Syrian participants said that they felt safer even though they were strangers in Turkey and did not know the language well.

### *Family Interactions*

All families in this study experienced genocide, discrimination, and war and lived with memories linked to those experiences. These had a substantial impact on family interactions both with their extended family members and other ethnic communities. An analysis of participants’ statements identified multiple areas of change in interactions.

**The Whole Family Is in the Home Country.** Nearly all participants reported that they had multiple family members still living in their home country. Not all family members were able to emigrate or even wanted to; in fact, some were angry that family members had left home. Relatives urged those who had left to return home. Often, the oldest members of the family chose not to move. Families often spoke on the telephone, but they could not afford to visit their home countries. One participant said, “My whole family is back in my country. I speak with them on the phone, but my children don’t know their uncles, aunts, grandparents, or cousins.”

**Little Interaction with Others in Their Ethnic Group.** Some participants stated that they had good relationships with people in their ethnic group. One man stated that he had no problem with anyone in their ethnic group, but his wife said, “We just greet each other but don’t mingle.” Another participant’s words supported this. She said, “You don’t know why these people came here. Are they burglars or killers? Thus, we are not very close with others in our ethnic group because we don’t know why they migrated here.” Participants had relationships with others in their ethnic group but not close relationships.

### *Family Roles*

Families have had to face extraordinary challenges to the integrity of their family structures. The analysis demonstrated some categories of change.

**Less Family Time.** Participants reported having too little time to spend together as a family. “In Turkey, we rarely get to see our children because we work all day long, and when we get home,

it is late, and they are ready for bed,” one complained. Another reported, “I have a small child, and she has a nanny. During weekends, she says she misses her home. She doesn’t see our house as a home and us as parents, which is very upsetting.”

Families feel enormous pressure to seek economic opportunities, so most of their time is spent at work. Their situations are made worse because they often hold multiple jobs and have conflicting schedules. Another woman said, “We came here for our kids, but we cannot take care of them because we have to work too much.” Most of the immigrants and refugees are working in textile factories as unskilled workers. These people work long hours and undercharge.

**Strong Family Ties and Trust.** Many participants believed that family togetherness should be kept at a high level. One participant stated, “We hang out together. In the past, the extended family came first, and then the nuclear family. Now everything’s different. The nuclear family is much stronger than it used to be since all we have is us.”

Another participant said, “Because we are in another country with a language other than our own, we are closer to each other than before. We are all alone here.” Almost all participants stated that they had good relations with their children, who they believed were basically “good kids.”

They stated that healthy and successful family living requires trust within the family. “We cannot lock up our children at home. We have to have some trust in them,” reported one. Another one said, “Our kids are all alone at home while we are working all day. We have to trust them. And I trust them. They are good kids.” Acar (2023) also found out that family trust and support is very important for children by stating, “Those who felt supported and understood by their families reported higher levels of resilience, self-esteem, and cultural identity.” (p. 57)

### *Changes in Family Structure*

All participants’ families had moved from their own country and began new lives in a new environment, so some changes in their family structure occurred. Analysis of participants’ statements identified some changes.

**The Children Are Already Assimilated into Turkish Culture.** Parents claimed that their children adapted to their new environment with ease because they were very eager to accept the Turkish way of life. A parent stated, “Children aren’t the same anymore.”

Another claimed, “My daughter does not know our own culture or language.” Parents wanted their children to adjust successfully to this new life but worried that in embracing the Turkish way of life, they would lose touch with their traditions.

**Mothers are Prominent.** Like the children, women were also able to adapt to their new environments more easily than men. Women knew Turkish better than men. In most of the interviews, women were more talkative than men, and they typically commented the following: “My husband doesn’t know Turkish well.” In some interviews, women translated some questions to their husbands because the latter did not understand the question in Turkish; furthermore, some men were timid about answering questions, especially about their own culture, ethnic groups, and country.

### *The Drawings*

The second part of the results emerged from the children’s drawings, which were added to the study to depict the realities of the participants’ family structures. In this section, children’s drawings are presented, and interviews and drawings are compared.

The migration process is supposedly more harmful to children than adults; however, because the children in this study were between 8 and 12 years of age, most of them had not witnessed the migration or were too young to remember it. At first, I had planned to obtain drawings of the migration process from children, but the teachers indicated that most of them were born in Turkey. Thus, the children were asked only to draw a picture of their families to secure a better understanding of family unity after the war and to compare the drawings with the parents' interviews. The themes that emerged from the drawings were (a) prominent mothers, (b) united families, (c) happy children, (d) language problems, and (e) migration.

Reproductions of the drawings appear below.

Drawing 1



Drawing 2



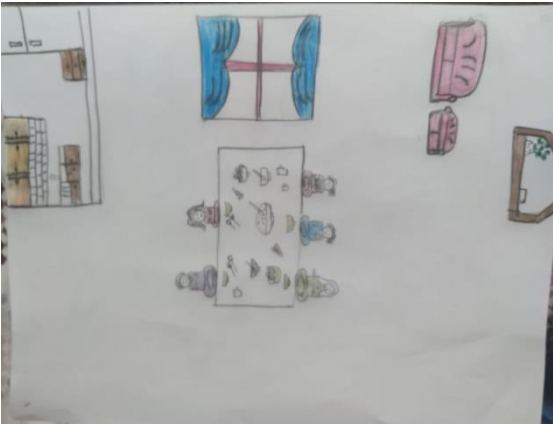
Drawing 3



Drawing 4



Drawing 5



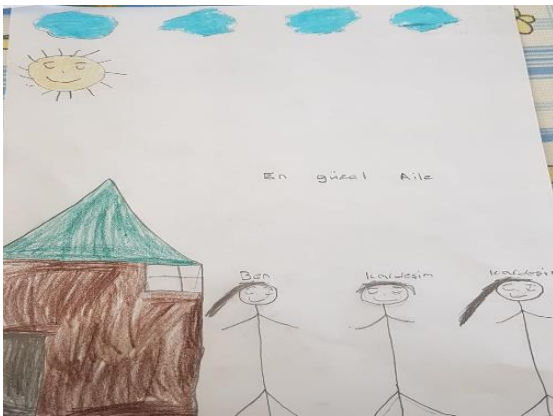
Drawing 6



Drawing 7



Drawing 8



Drawing 9



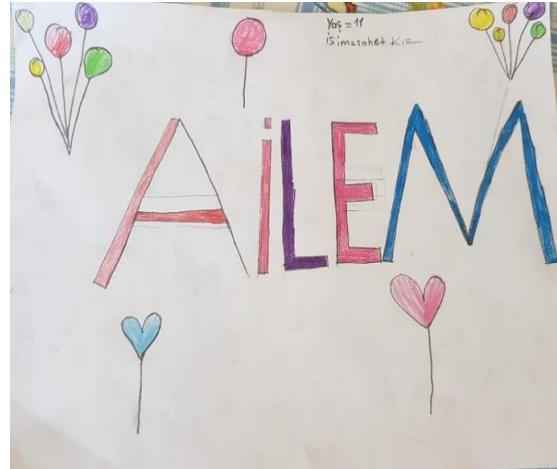
Drawing 10



Drawing 11



Drawing 12



Drawing 13



Drawing 14



### ***Prominent Mothers***

In some of the drawings, children drew their mothers larger than their fathers or in the foreground of the picture, indicating that they saw their mothers as more dominant than fathers. Drawings 1, 2, 3, and 4 are examples. This could also mean that the fathers are working, and the mothers are spending more time caring for kids in a more traditional Turkish and Syrian context. It could also mean that children see their mothers as closer to them than to their fathers.

### ***United Families***

Generally, children drew the entire family together, united and holding hands with one another; see Drawings 3, 5, 6, and 7. Drawing 8 depicted children without parents, however, showing only siblings. It might be due to the fact that the parents are overworking and they spend more time with their siblings at home.

### ***Happy Children***

All drawings depict happy children, as shown by the colors used in the drawings. Black and grey carry negative connotations, and white, blue, and green, positive. Yellow, white, and grey convey weakness; red and black, strength. Black and grey are passive; red is active (Adams & Osgood, 1973). The children mostly used blue, green, and red, reflecting themselves as good and active. Drawing 8 is predominantly red; Drawing 6 is predominantly green; Drawing 9 is predominantly blue and red. Drawing 10 also has red. Drawing 11 includes some text indicating that the child believed he has “the best family”; his use of red and yellow suggests that he is active.

### ***Language Problem***

The drawings of two children included only the words “family” and “my family,” colored in, perhaps because of the language barrier; see Drawings 9 and 12. The children may not have understood what they were asked to draw. When they were told to draw a picture of the family and color it, they understood the task of coloring the word “family.” Their use of red shows that they are happy. The numerous hearts in the picture show Their love towards their family.

### ***Migration***

The only two children who witnessed the migration process drew pictures of it; see Drawings 13 and 14. Drawing 13 shows the parting from the child’s extended family. Many people and rocks appear on the shore with a mountain and also a beach. This child may have had confused feelings about migration.

### **Conclusion**

Concentrating on understanding the changes and effects of immigration on family structures and family relations in immigrant families, I used qualitative research methods, including interviews with parents and drawings by children. Six distinct themes emerged from the parent interviews: (a) reasons for migration, (b) adaptation process, (c) family standard of living, (d) family interactions, (e) family roles, and (f) changes in family structure. The themes that emerged from the drawings were (a) prominent mothers, (b) united families, (c) happy children, (d) language problems, and (e) migration. The use of both parent interviews and children’s drawings facilitated a deeper understanding and an opportunity to compare perspectives.

State instability, famine, and civil war have characterized the recent history of immigration flow to Turkey from nearby countries. Immigrants from Afghanistan, Iran, and Syria have arrived in Turkey, and people from all these nations were represented in the study. Findings corroborate, specify, and elaborate on the satisfaction and happiness resulting from migration to Turkey despite some negative effects on their socioeconomic and family lives; nevertheless, the positive effects outweighed the negative.

The findings of this study suggest that migration has negative effects on immigrants, but regardless of all the losses and difficulties, they migrated to escape danger and to ensure the survival of their families for the sake of their children. Immigrants who were forced to depart their countries left their homes, workplaces, status, and whatever they had been saving for throughout their lives (Ekren, 2013). Some participants stated that they had been wealthy and owned many possessions in their home countries, showing that migration hurt immigrants economically,

bringing with it negative social effects on immigrants' status and economic class. Other studies have shown that for some, migration led to unemployment and loss of status, diminishing their identity (Colic-Peisker, 2003). They had many problems finding jobs in countries to which they had migrated, and even if they found employment, they still lacked social security and were forced to work for low rates (Üstübici, 2011). Thus, the most important issue for immigrants was employment (Koç et al., 2015).

Ekmen and Koçak (2020) found that migration involves social change and affects immigrants' social and cultural lives. Their participants were affected by all types of social issues, such as relationships in the neighborhood, food culture, style of dressing, family structure or type, family roles, and responsibilities, among others. They also concluded that migration affected sociocultural structure because of migration-caused changes in the relationships of participants with their environment and within family dynamics.

Concerning the cultural and social adaptation process, some changes could be felt throughout the entire process of migration (Tuzcu & Bademli, 2014). For example, this study documents problems associated with the language barrier. Without a knowledge of the Turkish language, participants could not find their way home if lost or defended their rights at work. In addition, immigrants' food culture was affected because their children wanted to eat Turkish foods, but their style of dress, family structure, family roles, and responsibilities had not been affected by the migration.

The current study shows that migration did not necessarily change participants' family structure, dynamics, or relationships, but changes encountered by immigrants expanded women's responsibilities, making women's roles and status more important within the family structure or dynamics (Yıldırım, 2007). Previous researchers have also discerned that women's employment and exposure to women's rights discourse increased migrant women's status relative to migrant men (Bui & Morash, 1999). Women were often empowered both economically (by obtaining work outside the home) and culturally (through greater exposure to women's rights discourse) when they moved to the United States (Heger Boyle & Ali, 2009). The results of this study overlap with previous studies in that interviews and drawings showed that mothers moved ahead of fathers in the eyes of the children. Other researchers also observed that women were more active and talkative than men after immigration.

To sum up, even though migration affected immigrants and families, people who migrated to Turkey because of war, economic hardship, or government pressure, this study demonstrates happiness, not necessarily economically but psychologically; they were happy and relaxed. They did not have to worry about their safety or the future of their children. Most of the immigrants uprooted their lives for the sake of their children. Even though they could not spend much time with their children because of long hours at work, they believed they made the right move for them. When compared, the positive effects of migration outweighed the negative effects on immigrant families. This is good for children because "a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development is greatly influenced by the family and by the relationships formed among family members" (Rasool & Zhang, 2020, p. 146).

This study demonstrates some additional significant advantages of qualitative family research, including its facilitation of viewing issues through a family lens rather than an individual lens, its potential to uncover novel family constructs not explicable with pre-existing theories or measures, and its ability to transmit the voices of people who would otherwise not be heard. Including children's drawings in the study, furthermore, allowed a view of the problem from two perspectives.



Some limitations, however, are present in this study. The sample is not typical of all immigrant families in Turkey because it includes only households that could be contacted and could communicate in Turkish. Nevertheless, this group of families was diverse enough in terms of its demographics; a generalization cannot be drawn from a group of individuals with too wide a range of characteristics. The family members' claims, however, appear to be supported by other research and by the artwork of the children. The reliability of the coding was not calculated. Given that this coding technique was based on 15 years of experience, the likelihood of researcher biases in coding was reduced. Last but not least, a drawback of this study is that it lacked the feelings of a distinct family and how its members handled change. For future research, carrying out more research to better assess these results, perhaps in a case study, is crucial.

As war and mass violence continue throughout the world, individuals and families have been forced to flee in large numbers to other countries for sanctuary. By adding a layer of complexity to the analysis of immigrant families, my team was able to improve our understanding of participants' experiences and family dynamics. The migration flow will continue around the world, so leaders of host countries should be especially aware of the extent to which immigrant families are affected and how their family dynamics change in the process of immigration. An awareness of the realities of immigrant families will help host countries shape their immigrant policies. In addition, most of the immigrant families who migrated to Turkey planned to move eventually to European countries, so this study will also be helpful to those countries accepting immigrant families through Turkey.

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