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Original Article

The Analysis of the Rights and Welfare of Refugees in Turkey based on the Max-Neef Human Scale Development Approach*

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Abstract

Turkey is a country with the largest immigrant population in the world. In 2011, Turkey had to quickly prepare its laws and practices for immigrants. However, the fieldwork indicates that there are some deficiencies in the rights, needs and welfare of immigrants, especially women, children, elderly, disabled and LGBTIQ. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the situation of meeting the human needs of migrants in Turkey by analysing Turkish migration policy systemically and deeply. To do that, the human need matrix of Max-Neef is used. According to Max-Neef, human needs are categorised as existential and axiological. The most detected categories in Turkish migration policy are protection-having, subsistence-being and protection-doing. It shows that the Turkish migration policy only barely covers fundamental human needs. There is a huge gap between documents and practical usage of them in the field. It is suggested that it is important and urgent to develop more humane, whole and social work–focused migration policy and services for women, children and other disadvantaged groups.

Keywords

Social justice, intersectionality, international migration, migration policy, international social work

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Introduction

Immigration is as old as human history. The history of nations is full of immigration and immigration dynamics. Especially in the last century, immigration dynamics changed due to economic, political and climatic complications and problems. The Turkish experience has been quite shocking and intense. The massive emigration from the Syrian Arab Republic to Turkey and the following open-door policy adopted by Turkey accelerated the immigration to Turkey. It could be argued that Turkey has started to experience certain social, cultural, political and economic struggles and reactive efforts, especially in social welfare and social work, due to these relatively sudden changes, because Turkey is a country that cannot grant refugee status to Syrian migrants, and until 2013, it also lacked a comprehensive law regulating migration, migrants and the services to be provided to them (United Nations [UN], 1967, 1951).

The two main immigration regulations in Turkey, Law 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) and the Temporary Protection Regulation (TPR), have diverse definitions for the concept of immigration. The Turkish Republic gives temporary protection status to only Syrian nationals, and any other migrants from east of Turkey can be given international protection status. Naturally, politics requires such definitions and diversity and could be discussed by political scientists. However, all these people are immigrants, regardless of the definition and categorisation in these documents based on human rights. They have left their habitats where they have established their lives and have emigrated for various reasons. Thus, the status of the refugees deeply affects their psychological, social and economic lives in Turkey.

While Turkey has been a country of emigrants until 2012, it gradually started to become a country of immigration (The World Bank, 2010, 2012). Consequently, the efforts to control increasing immigration were adopted. The significance of a holistic, long-term and general immigration policy based on the criteria set by the European Union has gradually been realised due to the mass immigration to Turkey, especially after the war in Syria during the last decade. Thus, Turkey had to reevaluate immigration objectives and strategies due to the refugees it received during the last decade.

Although it is known that immigrants could benefit from social welfare services in the country of arrival, whether their needs are provided adequately is a topic of discussion. Research on social work provided for immigrants reported that immigrants were considered an 'exception' rather than normalising their status (Bakewell, 2010). However, this is contrary to the basic values of social work, and it is necessary to provide not only basic needs but also all developmental requirements and human rights instead of considering immigrants as an exceptional group of 'others' (Masocha, 2014). Thus, immigrants should be approached with social justice, non-oppression and discrimination, and human rights should be prioritised when working with immigrants. For this purpose, there was a need for a multidimensional approach that comprehensively addresses and analyses the needs of immigrants. The current study was based on this requirement for Turkey. To normalise the status of the immigrants and to improve available social services

based on knowledge, skills and values, it should be recognised that immigrants are unique, and their developmental needs, in addition to basic human needs, should be respected. Thus, the determination of an adequate approach to analyse these needs is also important. An adequate human need approach was developed by Max-Neef (2007; Max-Neef et al., 1991).

Manfred Max-Neef developed a new praxis (application) based on human-scale development. According to Max-Neef (2007), human needs should be perceived as a system, and therefore, they are interconnected and interactive. Human needs could be classified in several categories. Max-Neef categorised these needs into two main categories (Max-Neef et al., 1991): existential and axiological needs, presented in a matrix (Table 1). The matrix reflects the interactions between existential needs (being, having, doing and interacting) and axiological needs (subsistence, affection, understanding, protection, participation, idleness, creation, freedom and identity).

Social work, as can be understood from its core values, is a social justice profession. This means that it prioritises human rights and empowerment. For this reason, it is inevitable that the focus of social justice, work against oppression and discrimination, and human rights should be at the forefront in social work with immigrants. To provide all these and to support the knowledge base of social work in this field, it is important to evaluate the needs of immigrants in depth and multidimensionally, through an approach that offers a different perspective on human needs. The starting point of this study is this importance and necessity. Due to the scope of human needs categories and their comprehensive capacity to analyse human life, the status and needs of refugees in Turkey were investigated on the basis of the Max-Neef human needs matrix and local policies, legal documents and the social structure in Turkey. Moreover, the provision and formulation of rights and freedoms, along with the responsibilities of the welfare state, are shaped collectively through a country's laws, regulations and official policy documents. In this context, the present study analyses these official texts in order to capture a comprehensive picture of how migrants are represented within social policy frameworks and under what conditions they are expected to sustain their lives. Therefore, the study aimed to examine the psychological, economic, spiritual and cultural conditions of immigrants and to explore how immigration policies in Turkey—home to the largest immigrant population in the world—address their basic human needs. It also sought to assess the extent to which these needs are met and how related policies affect immigrants' physical, emotional, cognitive and social well-being, as well as their overall living conditions.

Methods

This study was designed using document analysis, a qualitative research method well suited for examining official texts within their historical and policy contexts. Given the evolving nature of the migration policy in Turkey, document analysis allowed for a longitudinal and in-depth exploration of how migrants' needs are addressed through legal and institutional frameworks. Data were collected between 2018 and 2022 through systematic internet and library searches. The

Table 1. Matrix of Needs and Satisfiers.

Needs According to Axiological Categories	Needs According to Existential Categories			
	Being	Having	Doing	Interacting
Subsistence	Physical health, mental health, equilibrium, sense of humour, adaptability	Food, shelter, work	Feed, procreate, rest, work	Living environment, social setting
Protection	Care, adaptation, autonomy, equilibrium, solidarity	Insurance systems, savings, social security, health systems, rights, family, work	Cooperate, prevent, plan, take care of, cure, help	Living space, social environment, dwelling
Affection	Self-esteem, solidarity, respect, tolerance, generosity, receptiveness, passion, determination, sensuality, sense of humour	Friendship, family, partnerships, relationships with nature	Make love, caress, express emotions, share, take care of, cultivate, appreciate	Privacy, intimacy, home, space of togetherness
Understanding	Critical conscience, receptiveness, curiosity, astonishment, discipline, intuition, rationality	Literature, teachers, method, educational, policies, communication policies	Investigate, study, experiment, educate, analyse, meditate	Settings of formative interaction, schools, universities, academies, groups, communities, family
Participation	Adaptability, receptiveness, solidarity, wittiness, determination, dedication, respect, passion, sense of humour	Rights, responsibilities, duties, privileges, work	Become affiliated, cooperate, propose, share, dissent, obey, interact, agree on, express opinions	Settings of participate, interaction, parties, associations, churches, communities, neighbourhoods, family
Idleness	Curiosity, receptiveness, imagination, recklessness, sense of humour, tranquillity, sensuality	Games, spectacles, clubs, parties, peace of mind	Daydream, brood, dream, recall old times, give way to fantasies, remember, relax, have fun, play	Privacy, intimacy, spaces of closeness, free time, surroundings, landscapes
Creation	Passion, determination, intuition, imagination, boldness, rationality, autonomy, inventiveness, curiosity	Abilities, skills, method, work	Work, invent, build, design, compose, interpret	Productive and feedback settings, workshops, cultural groups, audiences, spaces for expression, temporal freedom
Identity	Sense of belonging, consistency, differentiation, self-esteem, assertiveness	Symbols, language, religions, habits, customs, reference groups, sexuality, values, norms, historical memory, work	Commit oneself, integrate oneself, confront, decide on, get to know oneself, recognize oneself, actualize oneself, grow	Social rhythms, everyday settings, settings which one belongs to, maturation stages
Freedom	Autonomy, self-esteem, determination, passion, assertiveness, open-mindedness, boldness, rebelliousness, tolerance	Equal rights	Dissent, choose, be different from, run risks, develop awareness, commit oneself, disobey	Temporal/spatial plasticity

Source: Max-Neef et al. (1991).

documents analysed included national and international laws, regulations and policy documents that shape Turkey's migration policies. Only official documents that were publicly accessible and in force at the time of analysis were included. These documents were obtained from the websites of relevant ministries, public institutions such as the Presidency of Migration Management and the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey, as well as international organisations. The selection of documents was guided by specific criteria: (a) being officially valid at the time of analysis; (b) accessible through official institutional websites; (c) primarily focused on the migration policy in Turkey; (d) publicly available and official in nature; (e) issued by national and/or international institutions; (f) addressing the rights and needs of migrants living in Turkey; and (g) directly related to human needs. The document analysis sample included 46 national and international documents, laws, regulations and agreements that determined Turkish migration policies.

The Max-Neef human needs matrix was used both as a theoretical framework and as a tool for data collection and analysis. Accordingly, content analysis was conducted based on Max-Neef's taxonomy of human needs, focusing particularly on the intersections of existential and axiological dimensions such as protection-having, subsistence-being and protection-doing. This approach enabled a human-centred evaluation of the extent to which Turkey's migration policies meet the fundamental needs of migrants.

Following the selection of the documents, the data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis was guided by Max-Neef's human-oriented development approach, particularly his matrix of fundamental human needs, which categorises needs along existential (being, having, doing, interacting) and axiological (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, freedom) dimensions. For the purposes of this study, three intersecting need categories were used as the primary coding framework: protection-having, subsistence-being and protection-doing (Table 1). These categories allowed for a structured and comparative assessment of how different policy texts address the material and psychosocial needs of migrants. The coding process was carried out manually to ensure close engagement with the data. To enhance the credibility and consistency of the analysis, peer debriefing and cross-checking were applied throughout the coding process. In addition, the use of official documents increased the dependability of the study, as these texts are publicly accessible, verifiable and produced by authorised institutions. Transparency in data selection and analysis procedures, along with a clearly defined theoretical framework, contributed to the trustworthiness and analytical rigor of the research.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two interrelated theoretical perspectives: Max-Neef's human scale development approach and the theory of intersectionality. Max-Neef's framework offers a human-centred model of development, emphasising that fundamental human needs are universal, finite and rooted in human dignity. Rather than equating development with economic growth, this approach defines

well-being as the satisfaction of needs across existential (being, having, doing, interacting) and axiological (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, freedom) categories. Within this matrix, poverty and marginalisation are conceptualised as the failure to satisfy one or more of these interrelated needs. This theoretical lens allows for a nuanced assessment of migration policies in terms of how effectively they respond to the lived realities and multidimensional needs of migrants (Max-Neef et al., 1991).

To further enrich the analysis, the study incorporates intersectionality theory, originally developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (2011), which highlights how overlapping systems of power—such as gender, race, class and legal status—create unique and compounded forms of disadvantage. Particularly in the case of migrant women, a purely gender-based analysis may fail to capture the layered vulnerabilities they face during and after migration. Intersectionality enables an understanding of how institutional structures and social policies may reinforce or neglect these interlocking forms of oppression. In Turkey, for example, migrant women are often positioned within legal and social frameworks as 'victims' in need of protection, which—while seemingly benevolent—can undermine their agency and perpetuate dependency. Integrating intersectionality with Max-Neef's human needs matrix thus enables a more holistic evaluation of whether and how migration policies meet the complex and intersecting needs of diverse migrant groups.

Results and Discussion

In the study, where the needs of individuals under international and temporary protection in Turkey were analysed based on human-oriented development, the analysis of legal, official, national and international documents that affected Turkish migration policies was conducted with the human needs matrix developed by Max-Neef. Based on the Max-Neef matrix, human needs are categorised into two categories: axiological (subsistence, affection, protection, understanding, creation, participation, idleness, identity and freedom) and existential (being, having, doing and interacting), which lead to 36 category intersections. In document analysis, references to only 21 of these 36 categories were identified (Table 2). Among these 21 categories, the adequate number of human needs categories mentioned in the documents was 6. Thus, it was observed that human needs were neglected in Turkish migration policies.

The document analysis demonstrated that the most frequently mentioned needs categories were protection-having (89), subsistence-having (62), subsistence-being (46), protection-doing (35), understanding-having (28) and freedom-having (21). The most mentioned needs included categories with at least 30 or more mentions (Table 2). Because some of the mentions are from international laws and treaties, the researches wish to focus on Turkish laws and regulations. Therefore, protection-having and subsistence-being categories have been discussed briefly, and protection-doing category has been widely discussed as comprising the focus of this research.

Table 2. The Number of Human Needs Categories Mentioned in Turkish Laws and Regulations and International Documents.

The Analysis Categories	Turkish Laws and Regulations	International Documents	Total
1. Subsistence-interacting	0	2	2
2. Subsistence-having	40	22	62
3. Subsistence-doing	3	3	6
4. Subsistence-being	22	24	46
5. Protection-doing	20	15	35
6. Protection-having	54	35	89
7. Protection-being	4	10	14
8. Affection-doing	1	0	1
9. Affection-having	2	1	3
10. Understanding-having	16	12	28
11. Understanding-interacting	3	6	9
12. Understanding-doing	2	3	5
13. Participation-interacting	0	3	3
14. Participation-having	1	0	1
15. Participation-being	4	1	5
16. Leisure-doing	0	1	1
17. Creation-doing	0	1	1
18. Identity-doing	0	1	1
19. Identity-having	7	4	11
20. Freedom-interacting	3	4	7
21. Freedom-having	8	13	21
Total	190	163	353

Protection-having Category Findings: Social Security and Healthcare Systems

According to the conducted document analysis, the needs of refugees were predominantly identified within the categories of 'protection' and 'having', as defined by Max-Neef's framework. The protection-having category includes social security and healthcare systems, rights, family and work. Thus, the document analysis revealed 54 references in Turkish laws and regulations and 35 references in international documents on these needs. Although the immigration experience is relatively new in Turkey and started with the massive arrival of Syrian immigrants in Turkey during the last decade, the high number of references to the protection-having category demonstrated that there were still difficulties in going further than the basic humanitarian needs of immigrants.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that refugees' rights to access healthcare, employment and social security in Turkey are guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Convention, to which Turkey is a signatory (UN, 1948, 1951). Access to healthcare in the protection-having category and the rights associated with this need were included in the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014), Foreigners and International Protection Law (2013), AFAD's

(2014a) Circular on the Execution of Services for Foreigners under Temporary Protection and the Ministry of Health's (2015) Healthcare Principles for Individuals Under Temporary Protection Directive.

In the protection-having category, other human needs were associated with access to social security and employment. Based on these findings, it is legally possible for individuals under temporary protection and international protection to obtain a work permit in Turkey. Employment rights are described in various regulations for individuals under international and temporary protection. It was observed that various paths were defined in the LFIP, TPR and 'Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners Under Temporary Protection' (2016) for access to employment and social security. As seen in basic Turkish legal texts on immigration, refugee, internationally or temporarily protected refugee statuses, etc., there were certain dualities between these statuses in access to employment. The identity cards of certain refugees in Turkey are considered work permits, while the employers of others should apply for a work permit. Previous studies reported that the employment with a work permit was around 3% (UNHCR, 2020), demonstrating problems in access to employment and social security. The most recent work permit statistics announced by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (2020) reported that 123,574 refugees received work permits in 2020. Only 62,379 Syrian refugees received permits out of 3.5 million Syrian refugees in Turkey (Aslantürk & Tunç, 2018). Although migrants' right to work is formally guaranteed in legislation and international agreements, there has been a noticeable increase in informal employment within labour markets, accompanied by a corresponding rise in local unemployment (Güler, 2018; World Food Programme, 2018, 2020).

Subsistence-being Category Findings: Mental Health and Integration

The third most frequently mentioned category, the subsistence-being category, included physical and mental health, balance, sense of humour and integration. The document analysis revealed 22 references in Turkish laws and regulations, and 24 references in international documents were associated with measures to satisfy these needs.

The findings in the category of physical health overlapped with those in the protection-having category. Thus, this section focuses on references associated with mental health and adaptation. There were no references associated with the balance and sense of humour needs.

The current LFIP (2013) includes a separate article for adaptation to draw the framework for adaptation applications. No findings were identified on the planning and execution of adaptation activities based on this legal framework, active institutions and organisations, and previous or planned efforts for adaptation. Document analysis findings did not reveal several references associated with adaptation. Social integration of the refugees requires recognition of their social rights (Aygün & Kaya, 2016). Similarly, in a study conducted in the USA on the integration of immigrants, it was determined that immigrant groups with low education and low employment rate experienced problems in social integration (Griffiths & Loy, 2018). The educational and economic findings of the current

study revealed certain economic and educational problems experienced by the refugees. It could be suggested that refugees experienced certain integration problems in Turkey. The Syrian Barometer survey conducted in 2019 also reported the same finding. In the study, Turkish participants were asked about the adaptation of Syrian refugees to Turkish society, and only 13.2% of the participants stated that Syrians have fully adapted to Turkish society (Erdoğan, 2020).

The study findings demonstrated that although there were several references to physical health, mental health was mentioned quite rarely. Since the refugees usually leave their home countries due to negative life events, access to mental health services is critical. A study conducted with refugees in Turkey investigated the difficulties experienced by the refugees before emigration, and it was found that almost all these difficulties led to psychological trauma and problems continue after arrival to Turkey with loss of identity, role and status, separation from or loss of loved ones, economic problems, adaptation/integration problems, gender issues and health problems (Cantekin, 2018). It was determined that inadequate mental health services are a significant problem for the refugees (Akgül Gök, 2019; Cantekin, 2018; Cantekin & Gençöz, 2017; Gültaç & Yalçın Balçık, 2018; Güneş Aslan & Güngör, 2019; İnaç, 2018).

Protection-doing Category Findings: Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Based on the document analysis, one of the most referenced categories was the protection-doing human needs category. The protection-doing category includes cooperation, protection, planning, care, assistance and development. Thus, it was determined that Turkish laws and regulations mentioned this category 20 times, and international documents mentioned this category 15 times. The LFIP, the main immigration law in Turkey, did not mention the needs associated with the protection, aid and development of the refugees. However, the Temporary Protection Regulation specified that healthcare, psycho-social support and rehabilitation of special needs groups should be a priority and provided free of charge as much as possible. The Ministry of Family and Social Work is responsible for the accommodation, care and protection of individuals with special needs under temporary protection such as unaccompanied children, disabled, women and those under international protection.

Refugee Women

Although the rights and services for women, children, LGBTI+, disabled and elderly refugees in this category were prioritised in legal texts, several studies have demonstrated that these groups frequently experienced social, economic and psychological problems and were disenfranchised.

Women needs and rights are described in Turkish official documents. However, women's rights were not specified in the texts on the protection and rights of refugees (Valtonen, 2016). The document analysis identified no specific rights and services for refugee women. Various inequalities significantly affect women due to just being a woman and a refugee (Morokvasic, 1983). Previous studies have

demonstrated that there were serious differences between the reasons for immigration, immigration experiences and the effects of immigration across refugee women and men. These differences are induced by the familial roles assigned to genders, the share of the household workload and different gender roles and expectations due to traditions and customs. Furthermore, the elevated psychological effects of immigration and employment on refugee women are among other factors for the above-mentioned differences (Akdeniz & Öz, 2009; Buz, 2008; Yılmaz, 2005). It was observed that refugee women experienced further disadvantages due to their gender. In a study conducted by the Foundation for Women's Solidarity with 50 Syrian refugee women in 2020, it was reported that 28 women were unemployed, 6 actively reached employment, 2 were obtaining a work permit and 4 were unregistered workers. The remaining participants were described as students. The women do not work because they could not find a job and due to household chores, such as taking care of children, ill and/or disabled individuals (The Foundation for Women's Solidarity, 2020a).

According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security data, 3,967 out of the 62,369 work permits issued in 2020 were issued to women. This low rate forced refugee women to work illegally. The studies reported that unregistered refugee women had to settle for negative work conditions. Therefore, they were preferred by employers due to their obedience and acceptance of low wages (Coşkun, 2017; Coşkun & Emin, 2016; Erder, 2011; Toksöz &Ünlütürk-Ulutaş, 2012). This paved the way for the informal employment of refugee women in precarious, dangerous and exploitative conditions. Refugee women employed in these precarious conditions tend to remain silent in cases of sexual abuse and harassment in the workplace. Certain studies have reported that they were intimidated by employers, and employers preferred refugee women if they were unregistered and met their sexual expectations (Baklacıoğlu & Kıvılcım, 2015; Biehl & Danış, 2014; Coşkun & Emin, 2016).

When the education rights were considered, according to the Ministry of National Education 2020 data, school attendance across male (49.18%) and female (50.82%) refugee children was similar. However, the attendance of female students sharply decreases in higher education. The number of female higher education students was 54,268, and that for male students was 100,178 (T.R. Ministry of Education, 2020). This could be due to forced youth marriage, another problem that refugee women experience. Studies and the AFAD report demonstrated that the age of marriage among Syrian women decreased to 15, and 60% of all women were married (AFAD, 2014b; Coşkun & Emin, 2016).

Migrant women in Turkey face significant risks of violence, abuse and exploitation throughout the migration process, risks that are deeply shaped by gender roles and social expectations. While policy frameworks and official discourse often recognise women and children as vulnerable groups in need of protection—categorising them under the term 'persons with special needs'—this approach tends to reduce migrant women's experiences solely to their gender. As a result, it reinforces a dependency on aid and protection mechanisms, rather than supporting long-term empowerment. Chesley (2020) argues that Turkey's refugee and migrant protection system reproduces traditional

gender roles, contributing to a narrative that portrays women as passive victims and men as inadequate for fleeing conflict. Such representations create a restrictive and often dehumanising discourse. Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality underscores the importance of considering overlapping factors such as class, race, migration status and legal precarity when analysing the experiences of migrant women. However, migrant women in Turkey are often not approached through this intersectional lens, which limits the effectiveness of support mechanisms and silences the complex realities they face. Research confirms that Syrian women in particular are exposed to high levels of gender-based violence and encounter systemic barriers in accessing resources, often leading them to remain silent in the face of abuse (Barın, 2015; The Foundation for Women's Solidarity, 2020a). These findings highlight the urgent need to move beyond gender-essentialist approaches and adopt more inclusive, intersectional frameworks in both policy and practice.

Child Refugees

One of the most affected groups by the consequences of immigration includes children. Recent figures revealed that there are almost 4 million refugees in Turkey, and approximately 1.7 million are children (UNICEF, 2019). Protection, rights, education and special child services for this large population group are key in preventing lost generation. The LFIP includes regulations that draw the legal framework for the protection, assistance and rehabilitation needs of children and unaccompanied minors.

Children, whether refugees or not, have access to rights and services under Turkish law, with the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Family and Social Work sharing responsibilities for refugee children. However, document analysis reveals a focus on services for unaccompanied children, with the Ministry of National Education falling short in meeting the current needs and problems of refugee children. These children face various psychological and psychosocial challenges, including separation from parents, loss of loved ones, abduction, violence and deprivation from social support. Studies, such as Gürsoy et al. (2017), show higher trait anxiety levels among refugee children compared to Turkish children. Other research, including Özen et al. (2001) and Werner-Seidler et al. (2017), indicates that refugee children share the sustenance concerns of their parents. A study by Harunoğulları (2016) with Syrian children highlights additional developmental, physical and spiritual problems for those separated from their parents or lacking support. A literature review by the Refugee Rights Center (2018), involving 15 children, reveals widespread psychosocial, economic and basic human needs problems, especially in education.

Field studies reveal high child labour rates among refugee children due to poverty. A study of 57 families, interviewing 165 Syrian children, found that 36% of them were employed, working 8–14 hours almost daily (Bozok & Bozok, 2018; Harunoğulları, 2016; Lordoğlu & Aslan, 2018). Refugee children are commonly employed in textile, service and construction industries, as well as seasonal

agriculture and shepherding (Atasü Topçuoğlu, 2015). The ILO estimates that 127,140 Syrian refugee children work in Turkey, underscoring the urgency and severity of the issue (Caro, 2021).

LGBTI+ Refugees

Legal frameworks do not address the needs of LGBTI+ refugees, leading to the neglect of a group requiring immigration support. Studies, such as Kara and Çalık (2016), reveal that LGBTI+ individuals often migrate due to oppression, violence or life-threatening situations. The massive migration influx to Turkey includes LGBTI+ individuals, whose human needs for protection are overlooked in Turkish laws and regulations (Üstübici, 2020). Experiences from the Right to Health Program for refugee LGBTI+ individuals indicate serious healthcare access problems, including non-implementation of regulations, language barriers and discriminatory behaviour by healthcare professionals (Kırıkçı et al., 2021). Human rights reports, including KAOS-GL Association (2016) and Araç and Aydın (2020), highlight racism, hate speech and discrimination against refugee LGBTI+ individuals in various domains. These findings underscore Turkey's failure to meet the protection requirements of refugee LGBTI+ individuals.

Elderly and Refugees with Disabilities

The rights and services for disabled and elderly refugees in this category were prioritised in LFIP and TPR. However, when the number of elderly immigrants in the migrant population group in Turkey is examined, it is seen that only information on Syrian immigrants who are considered under temporary protection in the data of the T.R. Ministry of Internal Affairs Presidency of Migration Management (2021). Based on the official data provided by the Ministry, among the total Syrian population of 3,535,989, only 67,225 are identified as elderly individuals. There were no detailed statistics on internationally protected refugees.

The elderly population among Syrian refugees is low, with no official data available on services provided for them. Mentioned in the definition of special needs, elderly refugees have access to basic health services. Field studies, such as a qualitative study in Mersin with 20 Syrians over 55 (Korkmaz Yaylagül & Aslan 2020), revealed that only 3 refugees were employed, 4 received aid and the rest relied on financial support from their families or spouses. Due to their exclusion from the job market, elderly immigrants lead dependent lives (Chenoweth & Burdick, 2001).

The language barrier poses a significant challenge for elderly refugees, hindering social connections and participation in Turkish social life (Korkmaz Yaylagül & Aslan, 2020). Consequently, social exclusion and language barriers emerge as primary issues for elderly refugees, suggesting higher interpretation needs.

Disabled immigrants, though rarely mentioned in documents, face challenges, with approximately 450,000 refugees with disabilities in Turkey according to UNFPA (2021). A study in Şanlıurfa province reported 200 war victim refugees applying to an association in 2016, with 1,500 disabled refugees receiving

services (Kaya, 2017). Another study found 261 disabled refugees with low incomes, 220 residing in inadequate housing and 234 having to pay for disability-related equipment (Taşkın, 2018). Immediate attention to their medical and psychological needs upon arriving in a safe country is crucial.

Conclusion

The current era is marked by high immigration, prompting the development of new policies and services globally. Turkey, hosting the largest refugee population, has undergone significant mobility changes. Investigating refugee needs and related policies in Turkey is crucial. The study, using Max-Neef's human needs matrix, revealed a focus on subsistence, having and protection needs. This highlights a problematic structure requiring urgent attention amid Turkey's immigration climate since 2011. Turkish immigration policies need to address social, psychological and broader needs beyond the fundamental ones, given the current 4 million plus refugee population. However, the study indicates that current policies still primarily focus on meeting basic needs, leading to challenges in their fulfilment.

Turkey has primarily focused on meeting protection and satisfaction needs for refugees, particularly in areas such as employment and healthcare. Despite efforts in laws and regulations, immigration practices fell short in providing adequate work permits and social security rights, as highlighted in non-official documents. Refugees faced challenges accessing equal rights and services, with discrepancies between official documents and practical implementation. Diverse refugee statuses in Turkish immigration laws, such as temporary protection, international protection, conditional asylum and secondary protection, created conceptual and categorisation issues, making equal distribution of individual rights problematic. The complexity and diversity of refugee statuses in Turkey led to various problems concerning needs, rights and justice for refugees.

Official migration documents in Turkey lack a gender equality and intersectionality perspective, particularly evident with the country's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, impacting migrant women significantly. LGBTI+ migrants are another neglected group, with no references to their rights and special needs in official and local documents. Consequently, LGBTI+ migrants, alongside women migrants, face substantial challenges, including basic needs like nutrition and housing, leading to human rights violations. Despite rights-based efforts by civil society organisations, LGBTI+ migrants emerge as the most neglected group in terms of human needs.

It could be recommended that Turkey should establish a long-term, sustainable, human rights–based and coordinated new immigration and integration policy. Rather than the emphasis on security and control, immigration policies should be based on security, human rights and social care. This immigration and integration policy should be permanent, because as emphasised by the current study findings, temporary services and policies implemented for decades led to the neglect of the human needs of refugees, limited the development and interrupted the human status of the refugees.

Data Availability

Data is available in Turkish upon request.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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