

## Adaptation and Future Expectations of Syrian Refugees Living in Mardin: Comparison Between 2014 and 2021

### *Mardin'de Yaşayan Suriyeli Mültecilerin Uyumları ve Gelecek Beklentileri: 2014 ile 2021 Yılları Arasındaki Değişim*

Hıdır APAK<sup>a</sup> 

ABSTRACT	ÖZ
<p>The aim of this study is to reveal the changes to the adaptation process for Syrian refugees over the years and to determine their future expectations. The study represents a quantitative research effort in which the survey model was used. In this study, the integration and future expectations of Syrian refugees were examined comparatively for two samples showing similar characteristics in two different time periods. The research is descriptive in order to understand and make sense of the change in Syrian refugees' adaptation, and their future expectations. The study sample consists of 178 Syrian refugees living in Mardin, Turkey since 2013. It was determined that the majority did not have difficulties adapting to Mardin, Turkey and there has been a negative change in their adaptation status over the years. The main result of the study with regard to future expectations is that the majority of the participants complained about the "uncertainty" they experienced, let alone drawing a positive picture of what kind of future awaits them. It has also been determined that this uncertainty has increased compared to 2014. The present study is valuable in that it reveals various results within a relational analysis model.</p>	<p>Bu çalışma, Suriyeli mültecilerin uyum sürecinin anlaşılması ve gelecek beklentilerinin belirlenmesi konusunda yıllara göre farklılıkları ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, tarama modelinin kullanıldığı nicel bir araştırmadır. Bu araştırmada Suriyeli mültecilerin uyum ve gelecek beklentileri iki farklı zaman diliminde benzer özellikler gösteren iki örneklem üzerinde karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiştir. Bir durum tespiti yapmayı amaçlayan araştırma, Suriyeli mültecilerin kente uyum ve gelecek beklentisindeki değişimi anlamaya ve anlamlandırmaya yönelik betimsel bir nitelik taşımaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemi Mardin'de 2013 yılından beri yaşayan 178 Suriyeli mülteci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre Suriyeli mültecilerin çok büyük bir kısmının Mardin'e uyum sağlamada zorluk yaşamadıkları ve yıllar geçtikçe uyum durumlarında negatif yönde bir değişim yaşandığı tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmanın gelecek beklentisi ile ilgili ortaya çıkan temel sonucu 'belirsizliktir'. Bu kararsızlık durumunun 2014 yılına göre artmış olduğu da tespit edilmiştir. Mevcut çalışma ilişkisel bir analiz modeli içinde çeşitli sonuçları ortaya koyması açısından değerlidir. Bu araştırmanın bulguları, daha önceki araştırma bulgularının yorumlanabileceği ve gelecekteki çalışmaların başlayabileceği daha fazla zemin sağlamaktadır.</p>
<b>Anahtar Kelimeler</b>	<b>Keywords</b>
Uyum, Gelecek beklentisi, Mardin, Mülteci, Suriye	Adaptation, Future expectation, Mardin, Refugee, Syria

<sup>a</sup> Doç. Dr., Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi, Sağlık Bilimleri Fakültesi, Sosyal Hizmet Bölümü. Email: [hidirapak@artuklu.edu.tr](mailto:hidirapak@artuklu.edu.tr)  
(Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding author)

## 1. Introduction

Due to the internal turmoil that broke out in Syria in 2011 as part of the so-called Arab Spring, millions of people were forced to leave their homes and migrate from where they lived. This situation represents one of the biggest migration crises in modern history. Turkey is amongst those countries that have, for various reasons, been one of the most common destinations for migrants. Most of the Syrians who migrated to Turkey are scattered across the country and in many provinces, though especially in Istanbul, Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa. Turkey has been the country where Syrians migrated the most for security, geographical proximity and political reasons. As of 2021, the number of Syrians under temporary protection status is around 3.7 million (UNHCR, 2021).

Almost half of the Syrian refugees in Turkey are hosted by the border cities of Gaziantep, Kilis, Şanlıurfa, Hatay and Mardin. Among these cities, Mardin has the least number of Syrian refugees. According to the data provided by the General Directorate of Migration Management, the number of Syrian refugees registered in Mardin as of 26.08.2021 was 89,998. It is anticipated that the Syrians population comprise nearly 5% of Turkey's population and 10% of Mardin.

The province of Mardin is one of more heavily populated provinces by migrants. Located in the Southeast Anatolian Region, Mardin is bordered by Syria to the south, Şanlıurfa to the west, Diyarbakır and Batman to the north, Siirt to the northeast and Şırnak to the east. The population of Mardin's city center consists mainly of Arabs and Kurds. Assyrians are also known as the first settlers of the Mardin region, who co-exist with Arabs and Kurds and, as a group, differ both religiously and culturally from the local population. Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, and Syriac are spoken in the city. The different cultural, social, and political experiences brought by the Syrian refugees who came to Mardin open up new areas to discussion. One such area is that of adaptation and future expectations. The real question is: "Do refugees adapt to the city, and do their future expectations change over the years?". In this way, it can be discussed whether adaptation and future expectations differ over time, beyond revealing just the current situation. To investigate this question, Syrian refugees who migrated to Turkey after 2013 and who still reside in Mardin were examined.

The first study, the precursor to the current one, was conducted in 2014 as a Master's thesis under the title "Adaptation of Syrian migrants and their future expectations: The example of Mardin" (Apak, 2014). In this study, the intention was to establish any relationships between the findings of new studies on similar models and questions and the findings of the 2014 study, and to further reflect on the changes and development in perceptions in society.

The concept of adaptation is quite complex and there is no currently agreed definition of such. In this study, the concept of adaptation is accepted to mean "a feeling and a way of life in which communities that come together spontaneously, voluntarily, or compulsorily can coexist peacefully within the framework of mutual acceptance and respect on a common belonging ground where pluralism is accepted" (Erdoğan, 2020), and as socio-cultural adaptation based on the acculturation model of Berry (1997). In Ager and Strang's (2008) adaptation scheme, access to the labor market, education, housing and health rights, social relations of refugees with other refugees, with their own communities and with members of the community to which they had migrated together, language and cultural knowledge, the security and stability and

the citizenship rights constitute the main criteria. It has been emphasized that one of the important components of this scheme is that social relations have important effects on adaptation processes. In this context, the attempt is made to associate adaptation with the approach adopted by the local people to the migrants and their discrimination-racism situation, the refugees' communication with the people of the region, and their feelings of being foreign and culturally close. In addition, the extent of social relations of the children of refugees with the local children and their recommendation to migrate to their acquaintances in Syria are also discussed as an indicator of adaptation.

Another factor that affects the adaptation and development of refugees is their expectations of the future. Evidence from refugee research shows that future expectations are related to adaptation (Mahönen, Leinonen, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2013). Future expectations can be defined as cognitive maps that include individuals' views, interests, concerns, and thoughts about their future (Nurmi, 1991). Future orientation represents the conscious image that individuals form about their future. For this reason, it provides a basis for goal setting, planning, exploring, and evaluating options and, as a result, it guides the development process of the individual (Seginer, 2003). The future is something that has not yet been experienced, but human desire to live according to one's own wishes leads one further in life. In this sense, the future expectation of individuals is what they want from individual and social life, depending on how, where, with whom, etc., in the future they want to be (İkizoğlu, Önal-Dölek, & Gökçearslan-Çifci, 2007). Future expectations are important for individuals' motivation and well-being, but the refugee situation can lead to low expectations or severe uncertainty.

The migration process can mean a better future and hope for refugees, or conversely a process in which uncertainties begin. With the migration process, refugees may experience confusion regarding opposing values in their perception of the future, and this may result in uncertainty. Future expectations become an important issue for individuals who come from conflict regions and feel the negative effects of such on their lives. For Syrian refugees, the migration process they experience can sometimes be a life-changing movement, though for the worse as well as the better. However, the common dream that inspires all refugees is for a better future (Deniz, 2009).

There are some studies regarding the adaptation of Syrian refugees and their future expectations (Aydin, Gundogdu, & Akgul, 2019; Baban, Ilcan, & Rygiel, 2017; Bucken-Knapp, Fasih, & Spehar, 2019; Şimşek, 2020; d'Abreu et al., 2021; İçduygu and Nimer, 2020; Kanak and Özen, 2018; Kayaoğlu, Şahin-Mencütek and Erdoğan, 2021). Such studies generally attempt to reveal the existing situation and its relationship with the variables. There are no studies that reveal the differences between specific years and attempt to make sense of the changes between them. In addition, longitudinal studies on adaptation and future expectation have not been found in the literature. It is thought that this study will contribute to the literature by revealing the differences in terms of the understanding of Syrian refugees' adaptation process to urban life and determining the future expectations of refugees specific to the research area. The main purpose of the research is to reveal the socio-cultural adaptation status of Syrian refugees and their future expectations by comparing them over the years.

## 2. Methods

This study utilised survey model among quantitative methods. Survey model focus on collecting data from those who represent the sample (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). With this model, the attempt was made to reveal the tendencies and views of the sample. In this study, adaptation to the city and future expectations of Syrian migrants were examined comparatively through two samples showing similar characteristics in two different time periods. The research adopts a descriptive quality to understand and make sense of the changes in Syrian refugees' adaptation to the city and their future expectations.

### 2.2. Sampling

The study sample, the original work with which was completed in 2014, consists of 132 people living in Mardin, was studied using the non-probability sampling method. In a study conducted in 2014, it was aimed to reach about 300-400 Syrian refugees. However, it was difficult to reach Syrian refugees in the early stages of war and migration. During that time, the Syrians did not want to participate in research studies and did not comfortably answer the survey questions since they thought that they were being observed and followed.

32 people were excluded from the study in order to ensure a normal distribution and to create a similar group (such as 20 people under 18 years of age were excluded from the study). In the 2021 study, 262 Syrian refugees living in Mardin were reached using purposive/criteria sampling. All 262 refugees had been living in Mardin since 2013.

It was easier to conduct surveys with Syrian refugees compared to the studies conducted in 2014. However, it was difficult to reach Syrian refugees who live in Mardin since 2013. Most of the Syrians went to big cities like Istanbul because of job opportunities. Therefore, the number of participants is small.

In order to create a sample similar to the 2014 study, 84 participants from the participants reached in 2021 were excluded from the study. For instance, the number of university students reached was high in the study conducted in 2021. Inferences were made in this sample to homologise the 2014 sample. The main reason for the inferences in both sample groups is to make the groups similar to each other.

Thus, the attempt was made to compare the sample rates of the two studies to each other. For a more meaningful evaluation of the findings of this research, different characteristics of the representative group, such as gender, age, marital status, education, employment status, and ethnicity, were also taken into account.

While it is not possible to simulate groups or reduce manipulation completely, even in experimental studies conducted in social sciences (Creswell, 2014), this study, which was not planned as an experimental study, was based on the assumption that it is not possible to completely simulate groups, and in both time periods (2014 – 2021), the intention was purely to gain a snapshot of the existing situation and make appropriate comparisons.

When the normality distributions of the independent variables in both studies are examined, it can be seen that the skewness and kurtosis are between -1.96 and +1.96. This shows that the data in both studies are normally distributed (Can, 2014). Information on the introductory characteristics of Syrian refugees within the scope of the research is given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Descriptive information about sample of studies

		2014		2021	
		n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	37	37.0	74	41.6
	Male	63	63.0	104	58.4
<b>Age</b>	18-30	49	49.0	88	49.4
	31-40	24	24.0	44	24.7
	41-50	17	17.0	31	17.4
	51-60	10	10.0	15	8.4
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	70	70.0	123	69.1
	Singe	25	25.0	45	25.3
	Divorced/Widow	5	5.0	10	5.6
<b>Education</b>	Illiterate	13	13.0	23	12.9
	Primary School	19	19.0	31	17.4
	Secondary-High School	52	52.0	95	53.4
	University	16	16.0	29	16.3
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Arabic	54	54.0	99	55.6
	Kurd	46	46.0	79	44.4
<b>Employment</b>	Unemployed	64	64.0	107	60.1
	Employed	36	36.0	71	39.9
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

The research questionnaire was created by the researcher in the 2014 study, with a similar questionnaire also used in the 2021 study. For the questionnaire created for the study in 2014, a question pool was created in line with the purposes of the research by examining previous research (Buz, 2008; Iversen, Berg, & Vaaler, 2010; Karataş, 2003; Poyraz-Tacoğlu, Arıkan, & Sağır, 2012; USAK, 2013) in the field, as well as the literature review on migration, integration, and future expectation. The questions are divided into three main groups and consist of 33 questions. The first part consists of the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the participants; the second consists of adaptation problems; and the third consists of questions to reveal their future expectations.

### 2.4. Collecting and Analyzing Data

Field research in the 2014 study was carried out between August 2013 and January 2014. During the research, the attempt was made to reach the sample group by frequently visiting non-governmental organizations, the workplaces where Syrian migrants work and the neighborhoods where they live. In the 2021 study, a similar approach was followed to reach the participants. Any necessary permissions were obtained from the ethics committee of a university for the study and the prepared questionnaire in the 2021 study. Data were obtained between March and June 2021. During the data collection phase, the participants were informed about the purpose and scope of the research, the process and the researchers through the informed consent attached to the questionnaire. Processing and decoding the data obtained during the research process is important for the data to gain meaning. These data were transferred to the SPSS 20 package program, then processed, and analyzed.

## 3. Results

This section describes the findings about the adaptation of Syrian refugees to the city and whether their future expectations differed according to year in line with the purposes of the

research. This section consists of two sub-sections, namely adaptation situations and future expectations.

### 3.1. Adaptation Status of Syrians

In this section, the findings regarding the adaptation processes of the sample group will be given. The adaptation process will be presented in the context of certain variables related to the participants. Findings regarding the adaptation status of Syrian refugees by year are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Adaptation status of Syrian

		2014		2021	
		n	%	n	%
<b>Problem in Communication</b>	Yes	9	9.0	41	23.0
	Partially	27	27.0	57	32.0
	No	64	64.0	80	44.9
<b>Local People's Approach to Migrants</b>	Well	47	47.0	46	25.8
	Normal	42	42.0	126	70.8
	Bad	11	11.0	6	3.4
<b>Situation of Feeling Themselves Stranger</b>	Yes	18	18.0	40	22.5
	Partially	34	34.0	70	39.3
	No	48	48.0	68	38.2
<b>Encountering with Discrimination-Racism</b>	Yes	8	8.0	8	4.5
	Sometimes	26	26.0	76	42.7
	No	66	66.0	94	52.8
<b>Cultural Similarity Situations</b>	Yes	45	45.0	85	47.8
	Partially	37	37.0	75	42.1
	No	18	18.0	18	10.1
<b>Social Relationship Status of Their Children with Local Children</b>	Good	40	54.8	52	41.6
	Normal	20	27.4	69	55.2
	Bad	13	17.8	4	3.2
	No Child	27	-*	53	-*
<b>Advising Immigration to Turkey</b>	Yes	77	77.0	65	36.5
	No	9	9.0	30	16.9
	No Idea	14	14.0	83	46.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* missing value. In this respect, the percentage is not written.

In the study conducted in 2014, 64% of the participants stated that they did not have difficulty with communicating with the local people, whilst 9% stated that they had difficulties with communicating. In the second stage, it is understood that a differentiation has occurred. According to this, the proportion of those experiencing problems amongst the participants increased to 23% whilst the proportion of those not having any problems decreased to 44.9%. In other words, the participants had more difficulties in communicating with the local people in 2021 than in 2014.

It is understood that there is a partial differentiation in the participants' feelings as strangers. In 2014, 48% of the participants answered "no" to the question "Do you feel you are a stranger in Mardin?" In 2021, this proportion was found to be 38.2%. The percentage of participants seeing themselves as strangers had thus increased over the years.

As seen in the table, nearly half of the migrants believe in cultural similarity with the host country. The proportions were almost the same in both phases of the research. As time passed, it was also determined that there was no significant change in the proportion of refugees feeling culturally close to the host country.

It has been determined that there was a serious change in the approach taken by the people of the region to migrants and in terms of encountering discrimination in 2021 compared to 2014. In the study conducted in 2014, 47% of the participants stated that the approach of the local people to them was 'good', while this had decreased to 25.8% in 2021. The main change was that in 2014, 42% of the participants saw the approach of the people of the region towards Syrian migrants as "normal", which had increased to 70.8% in 2021. While the participants defined the point of view of the host country towards them as better in the early stages of migration, this was found to be at a more normal level in the following periods. Similarly, in the context of encountering discrimination or racism, the 'sometimes' incidence of discrimination increased from 26% in 2014 to 42.7% in 2021. It can be stated that the approach of the people of the region to Syrian refugees decreased from good to normal levels and the frequency of discriminatory or racist behavior sometimes increased more.

In both studies, approximately one-third of the participants did not have children (2014: 27%; 2021: 29.8%). Among the participants, individuals who had children were also asked about their children’s relationships with the children of the host country. 54.8% of the participants in the research conducted in 2014 stated that their children had a 'good' relationship with the local children, 27.4% stated that they were 'normal' and 17.8% stated that their children had a 'bad' relationship with the local children. In the study conducted in the second stage, these proportions are 41.6% 'good', 55.2% 'normal', and 3.2% 'bad'. It was thus determined that there had been an increase in the 'normal' level of relationship between Syrian refugee children and local children in 2021.

It can be stated that one of the indicators of adaptation is the situation of recommending the country of immigration to other familiar migrants. In this context, it has been determined that there is had been serious change in 2021 compared to 2014. In 2014, 77% of the participants said that they would recommend that their acquaintances in Syria immigrate to Turkey. In 2021, only 36.5% of the participants said that they would make this same recommendation. While 14% of refugees stated that they had no idea about this issue in 2014, this proportion had increased to 46.6% in 2021.

**3.2. Future Expectations of Syrians**

In this section, the extent to which Syrians met their expectations in Turkey, how long they intend to stay in Turkey, their desire to become citizens of the Republic of Turkey, the estimation of the end of the war in Syria, how they saw the future with hope, and the state of thinking that they will have good opportunities in the future are considered. It contains the findings regarding in which country they would like to live if they could afford it, and the anxiety caused by their children growing up in Turkey. The findings about the future expectations of Syrian refugees are presented in Table 3 by year.

**Table 3:** Syrians’ perceptions of their future expectations

		2014		2021	
		n	%	n	%
<b>Situation of meeting expectations in Turkey</b>	Yes	28	28.0	33	18.5
	Partially	56	56.0	74	41.6
	No	16	16.0	71	39.9
<b>How long do you intend to stay in Turkey?</b>	0-1 year	5	5.0	4	2.2
	1-5 years	8	8.0	3	1.7
	Until conditions normalize	60	60.0	40	22.5

	I want to stay forever	26	26.0	50	28.1
	No Idea	1	1.0	81	45.5
<b>Desire to become a citizen of Turkey</b>	Yes	79	79.0	117	65.7
	No	15	15.0	10	5.6
	No Idea	6	6.0	51	28.7
<b>Forecast for the end of the war</b>	0-1 year	5	5.0	7	3.9
	1-3 years	10	10.0	8	4.5
	3-5 years	6	6.0	3	1.7
	5 years or more	18	18.0	5	2.8
	War never ends	19	19.0	6	3.4
	No Idea/God Knows	42	42.0	149	83.7
<b>Country they want to live in</b>	Syria	48	48.0	35	19.7
	Turkey	37	37.0	56	31.5
	A more developed country	9	9.0	52	29.2
	Indecisive	6	6.0	35	19.7
<b>Future expectation</b>	It will be better	57	57.0	55	30.9
	It will remain the same	11	11.0	27	15.2
	It will be worse	13	13.0	16	9.0
	No Idea	19	19.0	80	44.9
<b>The idea of seizing good opportunities in the future</b>	Yes	68	68.0	71	39.9
	Partially	24	24.0	77	43.3
	No	8	8.0	30	16.9
<b>Concern caused by their children's growing up in Turkey</b>	Yes	21	28.8	19	15.2
	Partially	7	9.6	79	63.2
	No	45	61.6	27	21.6
	No Child	27	-*	53	-*
<b>Looking to the future with hope</b>	Yes	69	69.0	47	26.4
	Partially	11	11.0	121	70.0
	No	20	20.0	10	5.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	* missing value. In this respect, the percentage is not written.				

In the study conducted in 2014, 28% of the participants stated that their expectations were fully met after they immigrated to Turkey, 56% stated that their expectations were 'partially' met, and 16% stated that their expectations had not been met. In the second stage, it is understood that a differentiation had occurred. According to this, the proportion of participants whose expectations had been met had decreased to 18.5%, and the proportion of those who thought that their expectations had not been met had increased to 39.9%. In other words, the participants stated that the fulfillment of their pre-migration expectations decreased as time progressed.

Looking at Table 3, it is understood that there is a differentiation between the 2014 and 2021 with regard to the length of time the participants wanted to stay in Turkey. In 2014, 60% of the participants answered, "until the conditions are normalized" to the question "How long do you intend to stay in Turkey". In 2021, this proportion was found to be 22.5%. Again, a clear differentiation is similarly seen, while only 1% of the participants answered 'I don't know' in 2014, 45.5% gave this same answer in 2021.

In the study conducted in 2014, 42% of the participants answered "I don't know/God knows" to the question of when the war in Syria would end, while this increased to 83.7% in 2021. The proportion of those who stated a time in 2014 or thought it would never end had decreased considerably by 2021. Similarly, 79.0% of the participants in the 2014 study stated that they wanted to be Turkish citizens, 15.0% said they did not want to be, and 6.0% had no idea. In 2021, 65.7% of the refugees wanted to be Turkish citizens, 5.6% of them did not want to be,

and 28.7% of them did not have any idea. It was found that the category with the main change was that having 'no idea', where there was uncertainty.

Nearly half of the participants (48%) stated that they would like to live in Syria if conditions would so allow. If the conditions allowed, 37% declared that they would prefer Turkey, 9% declared that they would prefer a more developed country, and 6% were undecided. In 2021, it can be stated that there had been a considerable change in the countries where refugees wanted to live. In the 2021 study, those who wanted to live in Syria had decreased to 19.7% and those who want to live in Turkey to 31.5%. Those who wanted to live in a more developed country increased to 29.2% and those who were undecided to 19.7%.

The perception and expectation of the future constitutes the most sensitive point of this study when considering the conditions of the refugees. In this context, to the question "How do you see the future", when asking the refugees, in 2014, 57% of the participants answered, 'it will be good', 13%, 'it will be bad' and 19%, 'I have no idea'. In 2021, it can be stated that they took a more uncertain stance in their future perspectives. Accordingly, 30.9% of the participants stated that the future would be better, 9% said it would be worse, and 44.9% stated that they had no idea about the future. It has been determined that almost all participants are uncertain about their future in 2021 and this uncertainty has increased compared to 2014.

In the study conducted in 2014, while 68% of the participants thought that they would have good opportunities in the future, this decreased to 39.9% in 2021. It was determined that there had been an increase in 2021 in those who partially think that they will have good opportunities in the future and those who think that they will not. Similarly, in the study conducted in 2014, 69% of the participants stated that they looked to the future with hope, while this had decreased to 26.4% in 2021. In 2021, the majority of the participants (70%) gave the answer 'partially' in looking to the future with hope; this was only 11% in the study in 2014.

One of the areas related to future expectation and future anxiety may be the anxiety caused by raising children in the host nation. 61.6% of the participants in the research conducted in 2014 were not worried about their children growing up in Turkey, while the proportion of those who were worried was 28.8%, and who were partially worried was 9.6%. In the study conducted in the second stage, it was determined that 21.6% of the Syrian refugees were not worried, 15.2% were worried, and 63.2% were partially worried. In the study in 2014, it can be stated that some of those who were not worried about raising children in Turkey had started to worry, albeit partially, in 2021. It should also be noted that the proportion of those who were concerned in 2014 had decreased in 2021.

#### **4. Discussion**

In this study, the concept of 'adaptation' is discussed in the context of refugees' reception, communication and social relations. In this context, the attempt was made to associate adaptation with the approach of the local people to the migrants and their discrimination-racism situation, refugees' communication with the people of the region, and their feeling of being foreign and culturally close. In addition, the level of social relations of the children of refugees with the children of the local people and their recommendation to their acquaintances to migrate to Syria are also discussed as indicators of adaptation.

In the research conducted, 44.9% of the participants did not have any difficulty with communicating with local people, 38.2% did not feel like foreigners, 47.8% believed in cultural

closeness with the host country, and 70.8% stated that they found the approach of local people to be 'good'. In addition, 41.6% of the participants who have children said that their children have a 'good' relationship with the host children, whilst 36.5% of the participants recommended to their acquaintances in Syria to immigrate to Turkey. When we look at these data in general, it can be stated that there is a certain extent of adaptation for Syrian refugees living in Mardin. Among the factors affecting the integration of refugees are the host society's policies towards refugees and pluralism, and the acceptance of refugees by specific religions and races (Berry, 1997).

It can be said that the vast majority of Syrian refugees do not have difficulties with adapting to Mardin, and many of the factors that facilitate adaptation come to the fore. This finding is similar to that of Erdoğan (2020) for border cities, where he found that 51.6% of Syrians think that they have "totally" and "to a large extent" adapted to Turkish society. In addition, he describes the Syrians' view of integration as "self-integration", that is, a spontaneous integration process comes into play by ignoring the reactions and concerns of the host society. Similarly, a number of other studies (Erdoğan, 2015; Kaya, 2015; Kaypak & Bımay, 2016) reported that Syrian refugees are happy to be in Turkey and they do not have any adaptation problems. Language, religion, ethnic origin, common historical ties, kinship ties, and common cultural characteristics are the leading factors facilitating social and cultural adaptation in Mardin. People who speak the same language, believe in the same religion, have the same culture and tradition, come from similar environments, and live in similar environments can adapt more easily when they migrate to a place where such factors can come into play. When the integration studies on Syrian refugees in Turkey are examined, the factors that make adaptation difficult are generally language deficiency (Erdoğan 2020), exclusion (Bolgün 2020; Üstün, Bayar, & Bozkurt, 2017), and uncertainties in legal status (Bolgün 2020). Cultural proximity (Erdoğan 2020), religious similarity (Erkan, 2016), social networks, and public services utilized (Bolgün 2020) stand out as some of the factors that facilitate adaptation.

Compared to the study conducted in 2014, seven years have passed since the participants stated that they had more difficulties in communicating with the host public, they felt more alienated, they were exposed to discriminatory or racist behavior to a greater extent, and the approach of the people of the region to them was worse. In addition, while the participants defined the relationship between their children and host children as better or bad in the early stages of migration, they defined it as normal, that is, neither good nor bad, in the study conducted in 2021. In addition, almost half of the participants stated that they had given up the idea of recommending immigration to people in Turkey or that they had no idea about it. According to Koç and Anderson (2018), Syrian refugees are increasingly exposed to negative perceptions and attitudes of citizens in host countries.

Adaptation of refugees to a region is not something that will happen in a short time. However, we can express the processes that make the adaptation process either more difficult or easier. In the first years of migration, the fact that refugees gave a better overall impression of integration has changed over time, but that there has been a negative change in their adaptation situation over the years. One of the reasons for this can be explained by the fact that in the first years of migration, the society evaluates Syrian refugees with values such as neighborliness, fraternity, as guests and religious brothers, and exhibits positive attitudes towards them (Erdoğan, 2015; Gözübüyük Tamer, 2016). In addition, this change can be read

with the reality that the acceptance of the local people has seriously eroded over time, and related concerns have increased.

Another reason why there has been a change in adaptation over the years may be the expectations of refugees in the first years of migration and the emphasis that there may be changes in their social relations with local people. Refugees thinking that they will stay in Turkey for a short time in the first years of migration and whose first interaction is more positive may cause them to position their view of integration more positively. Similar to this output, Kabaklı Çimen and Ersoy Quadir (2021) it can be shown that the Syrians living in the camps have more positive attitudes towards Turkey. The reason for this is that they are less in touch with the local people and thus encounter the local culture to a lesser extent.

According to the study by Safak Ayvazoğlu, Kunuroglu, & Yağmur (2021) the psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of Syrian refugees is strongly affected by economic concerns, pre-migration expectations, religion, and the expectations/attitudes of Turkish natives towards Syrians. According to the information received from the participants, negative perceptions such as economic concerns and uncertainty regarding length of stay, prejudice, and discrimination negatively affect the adaptation of refugees and cause delays in psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.

This study attempts to address the future expectation of Syrian refugees. 18.5% of the participants reported that their expectations were fully met after they immigrated to Turkey. 45.5% of participants reported that they do not know the length of time they would like to stay in Turkey. 83.7% of participants reported the answer of 'I don't know/God knows' regarding their estimations of when the war could end. 65.7% of refugees stated that they wanted to be citizens of Turkey, and 31.5% of participants noted a preference to stay in Turkey if conditions allowed. 30.9% of the participants stated that the future will be better, 39.9% that they will have good opportunities in the future, 26.4% that they look to the future with hope, and 21.6% that they were not worried about their children growing up in Turkey.

It has also been determined that this indecision has increased compared to 2014. Findings that clearly reveal uncertainty are about the countries they want to live in, the length of time they want to stay in Turkey, the participants' predictions about the end of the war, and their desire to become Turkish citizens. In a study conducted with 1215 Syrian refugees settled in Sweden (Okenwa-Emegwa, Saboonchi, Mittendorfer-Rutz, Helgesson, & Tinghög, 2019), it was found that staying in the country for a longer period of time was associated with lower future expectations.

It can be stated that as time progresses, the desire of the participants to return to Syria decreases and their desire to migrate to a more developed country increases. Similarly, the proportion of undecided increased significantly in 2021. Syria is still far from safe and livable, and its instability discourages refugees from returning to Syria. For the majority, ending the war is a sine qua non for returning to Syria, but without security, livelihoods, and basic services such as health and education, the end of the war in itself will be insufficient (Kayaoglu, Şahin-Mencütek, & Erdoğan, 2021). It can also be stated that the chronic humanitarian crisis in Syria has in any case reduced the opportunity for Syrians to return to their country. Syria is still in a state of heavy conflict, its territory is under the control of various internal or external forces, and more than half of its population has been displaced. In this sense, any discussion about

the return of Syrian refugees to their homes without a peaceful solution for Syria and its subsequent redevelopment is undoubtedly problematic (İçduygu & Nimer, 2020).

Kayaoğlu, Şahin-Mencütek, & Erdoğan (2021) show that the voluntary return of Syrian refugees is conditioned to security, regime change, and livelihood opportunities in Syria. Refugees' aspirations for return should not be considered the dichotomy of "wanting to return to the home country" and "desiring to stay in the host country". The discussion of the return of refugees should be placed on a broader spectrum. In addition, the study found that the structural, cultural, and social aspects of adaptation were highly relevant to return aspirations.

It has also been determined that there is a decrease in the desire of Syrian refugees to stay in Turkey over the years. One of the reasons for this may be that nearly half of the participants thought that their pre-migration expectations had not been met. In addition, according to Kabaklı Çimen and Ersoy Quadir (2021), because of problems in basic services such as accommodation, health, and education, and the fact that they have difficulties in learning Turkish, adapting to a foreign culture, and communicating with Turks, Syrians do not want to live in Turkey in the future. Among the reasons for choosing a more developed country, it was determined in the same study that a country with high welfare standards and a comfortable standard of living was preferred.

These findings are similar to those reported by Erdogan (2020), according to which the hopes and desires of Syrians in Turkey to return to their countries are decreasing due to the ongoing war and uncertainty in their country, and their determination to return to Syria is rapidly decreasing. In the same study, there is an increase in the tendency of Syrians to go to a third country. It shows that the proportion of those who want to go increases if an invitation is received, that is, a legal opportunity is created. Since Turkey does not have a legal framework for granting refugee status, Syrian refugees cannot decide to settle in Turkey permanently. Moreover, the Turkish government constantly emphasizes the temporary nature of Syrians' stay in Turkey, which increases the sense of uncertainty among Syrian refugees. Finally, having almost no legal perspective on moving to a third country can negatively affect refugees' psychological health (Şafak Ayzazoğlu, Kunuroğlu, & Yağmur, 2021).

The opinions of the Syrians, who have a minimum of seven years of life experience in Mardin, about citizenship are also important. It can be clearly seen that the proportion of positive views on citizenship among Syrians is extremely high in the 2014 and 2021 studies. However, there was a significant increase in undecided people in 2021 compared to 2014. From this point of view, one of the reasons for the increase in indecisiveness in our study may be fear of not being able to return to Syria when they become Turkish citizens or the obstacles that may arise in going to a more developed country as refugees. In other studies (Bolgün, 2020; Erdoğan, 2020; Gülyaşar, 2017; Türk, 2020), the desire of Syrian refugees to become citizens of their host countries was similar to that found in the current study. In Erdoğan's (2020) study, 57.7% of Syrians want dual citizenship, whilst 22.6% only want Turkish citizenship.

The fact that nearly half of the participants answered that they did not have any idea about the future to the question "How do you see the future", that the majority of the participants gave the answer 'partially' to looking at the future with hope, and that the number of respondents who answered 'partially' to worrying about their children growing up in Turkey reveals this situation. In the literature, it is possible to find similar results pertaining to the situations of

Syrian refugees looking to the future with hope and seeing the future as uncertain (Apak and Acar 2020; Jabbar and Zaza, 2014; Kanak and Özen, 2018; Naseh et al, 2020). Uncertainty about the future of refugees is a serious risk factor.

## **5. Limitations, Implications and Conclusion**

The main purpose of the research is to reveal the socio-cultural adaptation status of Syrian refugees living in Mardin and their future expectations by comparing them over the years. In the research when we look at data in general, it can be stated that there is a certain extent of adaptation for Syrian refugees living in Mardin. It can be said that the vast majority of Syrian refugees do not have difficulties with adapting to Mardin, and many of the factors that facilitate adaptation come to the fore.

In this study, the attempt has been made to reveal the existing adaptation status of refugees and also to look at what kind of change has occurred between the years. Although we state that refugees generally adapt, it can also be stated that there has been a negative change in their adaptation status over the years. Over the years, the prolongation of the period of being a refugee and the increased contact with the local people may cause them to encounter various negativities and discriminatory behaviors. In addition, in the first years of migration, the migration of refugees to Mardin, which is geographically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically similar to their own country, and which is a border city, allowed them to adapt quickly. However, considering that adaptation requires an associated process, the differences between the two groups has become more prominent over time, disrupting the adaptation process.

This study attempts to address the future expectation of Syrian refugees. The main result of the study about the future expectation is 'uncertainty'. Among the answers given to the questions, 'partially', 'no idea', and 'undecided' were the most frequent answers. In this context, it can be stated that refugees' uncertainty about the future increases as time progresses.

In this study, compared to the 2014 study, the proportion of those who wanted to live in Syria and Turkey decreased; the proportion of those who wanted to live in a more developed country and those who were undecided has increased. It should be noted that return is only one solution for refugees as there are also two other possibilities: adaptation into the host country, and resettlement to a third country. These latter two possibilities should also be considered by all relevant actors.

It has also been determined that there is a decrease in the desire of Syrian refugees to stay in Turkey over the years. The problem or issue of integration gains more importance for a refugee community the majority of whom do not intend to return. It is essential to deal with the integration policies for migrants who plan their future within the borders of Turkey with the intention that their stay will be permanent. An effective adaptation policy has yet to be implemented in Turkey.

In this study, the request for citizenship was determined not as an expression of "permanence", but rather as the idea of "if we get citizenship, we will feel safe". It can be stated that there is uncertainty about the perception of the future, and it has been determined that there was a serious change in 2021 compared to 2014.

This study reveals how adaptation to the city and future expectations have changed over the years. However, the study has certain limitations. Firstly, it can be stated that although the

attempt was made to simulate the participants due to the cross-sectional nature of the study, it did not allow the behavior to be fully analyzed in a longitudinal manner. This study could have been performed longitudinally using the same participants; however, this was not ultimately possible due to the fact that the sample was part of a highly mobile population and refugees are generally reluctant to share their personal information in the early stages of migration. Therefore, future studies might be performed longitudinally. Secondly, since it was not possible to collect data from the same people in different years, the selection of the participants was manipulated, which represents another limitation to the study. Thirdly, due to the quantitative nature of the study, the processes of adaptation to the city and future expectations cannot be considered in depth. In this respect, there is a significant need for qualitative studies in this area.

In conclusion, the present study is valuable in that it reveals various results within a relational analysis model. The findings of this research provide further grounds on which previous research findings can be interpreted and on which future studies can be conducted.

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

### Introduction

Due to the internal turmoil that broke out in Syria in 2011 as part of the so-called Arab Spring, millions of people were forced to leave their homes and migrate from where they lived. This situation represents one of the biggest migration crises in modern history. Turkey is amongst those countries that have, for various reasons, been one of the most common destinations for migrants. Most of the Syrians who migrated to Turkey are scattered across the country and in many provinces, though especially in Istanbul, Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa. Turkey has been the country where Syrians migrated the most for security, geographical proximity and political reasons. As of 2021, the number of Syrians under temporary protection status is around 3.7 million (UNHCR, 2021).

There are some studies regarding the adaptation of Syrian refugees and their future expectations (Aydin, Gundogdu, & Akgul, 2019; Baban, Ilcan, & Rygiel, 2017; Bucken-Knapp, Fakih, & Spehar, 2019; Şimşek, 2020; d'Abreu et al., 2021; İçduygu and Nimer, 2020; Kanak and Özen, 2018; Kayaoğlu, Şahin-Mencütek and Erdoğan, 2021). Such studies generally attempt to reveal the existing situation and its relationship with the variables. There are no studies that reveal the differences between specific years and attempt to make sense of the changes between them. In addition, longitudinal studies on adaptation and future expectation have not been found in the literature. It is thought that this study will contribute to the literature by revealing the differences in terms of the understanding of Syrian refugees' adaptation process to urban life and determining the future expectations of refugees specific to the research area. The main purpose of the research is to reveal the socio-cultural adaptation status of Syrian refugees and their future expectations by comparing them over the years.

### Methods

This study utilised survey model among quantitative methods. Survey model focus on collecting data from those who represent the sample (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). With this model, the attempt was made to reveal the tendencies and views of the sample. In this study, adaptation to the city and future expectations of Syrian migrants were examined comparatively through two samples showing similar characteristics in two different time periods. The research adopts a descriptive quality to understand and make sense of the changes in Syrian refugees' adaptation to the city and their future expectations.

### Conclusion

In this study, the concept of 'adaptation' is discussed in the context of refugees' reception, communication and social relations. In this context, the attempt was made to associate adaptation with the approach of the local people to the migrants and their discrimination-racism situation, refugees' communication with the people of the region, and their feeling of being foreign and culturally close. In addition, the level of social relations of the children of refugees with the children of the local people and their recommendation to their acquaintances to migrate to Syria are also discussed as indicators of adaptation.

The main purpose of the research is to reveal the socio-cultural adaptation status of Syrian refugees living in Mardin and their future expectations by comparing them over the years. In the research when we look at data in general, it can be stated that there is a certain extent of adaptation for Syrian refugees living in Mardin. It can be said that the vast majority of Syrian refugees do not have difficulties with adapting to Mardin, and many of the factors that facilitate adaptation come to the fore.

In this study, the attempt has been made to reveal the existing adaptation status of refugees and also to look at what kind of change has occurred between the years. Although we state that refugees generally adapt, it can also be stated that there has been a negative change in their adaptation status over the years. Over the years, the prolongation of the period of being a refugee and the increased contact with the local people may cause them to encounter various negativities and discriminatory behaviors. In addition, in the first years of migration, the migration of refugees to Mardin, which is geographically, culturally, religiously, and linguistically similar to their own country, and which is a border city, allowed them to adapt quickly. However, considering that adaptation requires an associated process, the differences between the two groups has become more prominent over time, disrupting the adaptation process. This study attempts to address the future expectation of Syrian refugees. The main result of the study about the future expectation is 'uncertainty'. Among the answers given to the questions, 'partially', 'no idea', and 'undecided' were the most frequent answers. In this context, it can be stated that refugees' uncertainty about the future increases as time progresses. In conclusion, the present study is valuable in that it reveals various results within a relational analysis model. The findings of this research provide further grounds on which previous research findings can be interpreted and on which future studies can be conducted.

## APPENDIXES

### App-1: Ethics Committee Decision

T.C. MARDİN ARTUKLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ		
	ÜNİVERSİTE BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU KARARI	Dok. No: MAU- FRM-01- KARARLAR/02
		İlk Düz. Tar.: 02/01/2020
		Rev. No/Tar.: 00/...
		Sayfa: 1/1

OTURUM YILI	OTURUM SAYISI	OTURUM TARİHİ	OTURUM SAATİ
2021	2	01.03.2021	11:00

Üniversitemiz Etik Kurulu, Prof. Dr. Abdurrahman EKİNCİ Başkanlığında toplanarak aşağıdaki kararı almıştır.

#### **GÜNDEM 5:**

Üniversitemize bağlı Sağlık Hizmetleri Meslek Yüksekokulu Sağlık Bakım Hizmetleri Bölümü öğretim üyelerinden Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Hıdır APAK'ın 10.02.2021 tarihli dilekçe ile sorumlu araştırmacısı olduğu "*Mardin'de Yaşayan Suriyeli Göçmenlerin Kente Uyumluluğu ve Gelecek Beklentileri: 2014 ile 2020 Yılları Arasındaki Değişim*" başlıklı çalışmasının etik açıdan değerlendirilmesi,

#### **KARAR 5 :**

Kurulumuzca yapılan değerlendirme sonucu; Üniversitemize bağlı Sağlık Hizmetleri Meslek Yüksekokulu Sağlık Bakım Hizmetleri Bölümü öğretim üyelerinden Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Hıdır APAK'ın 10.02.2021 tarihli dilekçe ile sorumlu araştırmacısı olduğu "*Mardin'de Yaşayan Suriyeli Göçmenlerin Kente Uyumluluğu ve Gelecek Beklentileri: 2014 ile 2020 Yılları Arasındaki Değişim*" başlıklı çalışmasının etik açıdan değerlendirilerek uygun olduğu görüş ve kanaatine oy çokluğu ile karar verilmiştir.

İsmail YILDIRIM  
Personel Daire Başkanı  
Raporör



Hazırlayan: Daire Yönlü Kurul Başkanı	Kontrol Eden: Üniversite Yönlü Kurul Başkanı	Onaylayan: Üniversite Yönlü Kurul Başkanı
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