

Perception of Turkish Primary School Students towards Syrian Students: The Role of Educational Activities Integrated with Children's Books

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Mustafa Erol

Research Assistant, Yıldız Technical University, Faculty of Education
Department of Primary School Education, İstanbul, Turkey

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1675-7070>

Şüheda Köstekçi

Master's Degree, Yıldız Technical University, Faculty of Education
Department of Primary School Education, İstanbul, Turkey

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4968-088X>

Ahmet Erol

PhD, Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education
Department of Preschool Education, Denizli, Turkey

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7538-952X>

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of educational activities integrated with children's books on Turkish primary school student's perceptions of Syrian students. The research participants consisted of 51 Turkish primary school students educated in a primary school in Istanbul. The data in the study were obtained by scale prepared by the researchers. In the analysis of data obtained in the research, statistical techniques were used. According to the research findings, children's books were influential on students' immigrant perceptions. Accordingly, it was determined that there is a significant difference in favor of the post-test between the pre and post-test mean scores of the students in the experimental group. The study's findings indicate that educational activities enriched with children's books effectively affect primary school students' perceptions of immigrant children.

Keywords: Immigration, Immigration perception, Children's books, Primary school students, Syrian students.

Introduction

Migration is defined as a geographic, social, and cultural displacement movement of individuals or groups temporarily or continuously from one place to another for various reasons (Koçak & Terzi, 2012). Because of wars, famines, disasters, and security problems from past to present, people have migrated from their regions to safer places. These migrations may be not only national but also international. The reasons for international migration include political instability, human rights violations, oppressive regimes, political problems, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, low labor demand, economic issues, population problems, inadequate geographical conditions, desire to live in better conditions, and life safety (Helton, 1994; Dudley, Steel, Mares & Newman, 2012). Internal conflicts and political problems cause large masses to become refugees, asylum seekers, or immigrants in various countries (Lordoğlu, 2015).

As a result of migration, people encounter different cultures, and the necessity of coexistence with other cultures has revealed important problems regarding harmony and conflict (Bemak, Chung & Pedersen, 2003; Ron-Balsera, 2015; Suárez-Orozco & et al., 2008). These problems can be considered not only today but also the problems of the future. In the historical context, it is evident that migration occurred in every period of history.

The earth we dwell upon with the emerge of human history has always witnessed the phenomenon of constant migration (Koçak & Terzi, 2012; Ergin, 2016). One of the countries that experienced the most immigrant movement throughout history has been Turkey due to its geographical location. Since the end of 1970, especially from countries where refugees' borders, refugees have migrated to Turkey for various reasons such as transit migration and undocumented work (Elitok, 2013). The current largest wave of immigration in Turkey, Syria-induced migration mobility, is due to the civil war. As a result of the civil war that started in March 2011 in Syria, millions of Syrians had to migrate to different countries due to the poor living conditions of the war and to survive (Tunç, 2015). On April 29, 2011, about 250 people from Syria who took refuge in Turkey were the first group of refugees with whom the forced migration wave began; with the exacerbated civil war, it turned into a mass migration displacing millions of people fleeing from Syria. In this respect, Turkey, with its implementation of an open-door policy, gave every Syrian temporary protection status (Sağlam & Kambur, 2017). As a result of this situation, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey has steadily increased (Kılcan, Çepni & Kılınç, 2017). The distribution of Syrians in Turkey according to the latest data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the Number of Syrian Refugees in Turkey by Age Groups and Gender*

Age	Male	Female	Total
Total	1.970.837	1.661.785	3.632.622
0-4	248.452	231.702	480.154
5-9	260.848	245.168	506.016
10-18	351.666	311.400	663.066
19-24	320.235	229.287	549.522
25-29	209.177	148.286	357.463

30-34	173.452	126.626	300.078
35-44	204.382	167.824	372.206
45-59	143.282	137.981	281.263
60-90+	59.343	63.511	122.854

*As of January 17, 2019 (General Directorate of Migration Management of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Turkey)

According to the data displayed in Table 1, 986.170 (0-9 age range) being children, 1 million 649 thousand 236 Syrians in the 0-18 age range (45.4%) live in Turkey. Briefly, children constitute a large portion of Syrian refugees who took refuge in Turkey.

Many risk factors prevent immigrants from adapting to a different culture other than the culture they are used to (Birman, 2002). The separation of immigrants from their friends, family, home and a settled social life can lead to a deep sense of loss and guilt (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). This situation may cause immigrants to experience stress. Stress caused by migration can cause students not to feel comfortable and not belong to the school (Birman, 2002; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Many children who have to migrate to different cultures may be exposed to prejudices, discrimination, and negative attitudes (Fisher, Wallace & Fenton, 2000; Olsen, 2000). Not being admitted to peer groups is the biggest obstacle for immigrant and refugee children to adapt (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This kind of discrimination can have adverse effects on children's mental health (Ron-Balsera, 2015). In addition, not being accepted into the group and being excluded negatively affect the acculturation process, academic achievements, social interactions, and self-perceptions of children (Suárez-Orozco & Sunrez-Orozco, 2001; McBrien, 2005).

In Turkey, a social perception towards refugees, be it they reside in camps or not. Undoubtedly, the media has a significant influence on this perception. Considering the presence of people who believe in everything they view in the media without question, it is accepted that the media is an important source of information. Different presentations create different perceptions, and news is perceived as the illusion of perception. In addition, some metaphors are used in the media to define immigrants, asylum seekers,

minorities, and other ethnic and religious groups. It is noteworthy that the metaphors used are generally threatening, condescending, and marginalizing metaphors (Yaylacı & Karakuş, 2015).

With metaphoric narratives, not only the conceptual idea that immigration is threatening is supported, but also immigrants' entry into the country is associated with the threat itself (Keneş, 2016). Again, through the media, immigrants are defined as foreigners that should be excluded, and the immigrant problem is etherized in various ways. This situation is supported by academic studies as well. For example, in a study conducted, about 45% of the participants perceive Syrian refugees as negative (Sönmez & Adıgüzel, 2017). This othering is necessarily reflected in children and can affect the perceptions of students studying in primary schools. It seems possible to change these structured perceptions of students with the educational activities offered to them. Teaching methods to be used at this stage are also important. Children's books that students read amusedly can be used effectively in restructuring their perceptions because the first literary works that the child listens in language acquisition are lullabies, stories, and fairy tales. With the introduction of picture books into the child's life whose communication with literature is started through the adult, the child begins to look at his pictures while listening to the story and embody the story or tale he is listening to. Thus, the child creates the story he hears in his mind and adds it to his life. Children's books are one of the most important educational tools that enable children to develop in many areas such as cognitive, social, language development, and personality development.

It is important for children to identify themselves with book characters, adopt positive roles, adopt positive roles, and put them into life. Children also enjoy watching it while listening to the events of their peers in their books. In books where the heroes are children, illustrations should be colorful and cute and should be created with lines that are not very detailed. Paintings should carry details specific to their periods, by their ages, in the way they perceive the world. Children will watch and read such works with interest. The characters become an effective identification element in organizing

their relationships with the child's environment and raising awareness of their responses, with their solutions to problems, with their thoughts, emotions, and actions. Because the child reconstructs himself and his world with the character in the story, such stories supported by illustrations make it easier for the child to think and perceive the drawn characters and the writing. The heroes in the children's books cease to be a "hero" from the very first moment the child interacts with the book and becomes a "friend" with which the child establishes identification with him; thus, the child's sense of trust develops. This "friend," which was established, is sometimes an animal, a plant, a machine, and sometimes a human. Children at this age enjoy seeing living things or objects in their books that they see, hear, know, and know closely. In this respect, it can be beneficial to use children's books effectively to reconstruct students' perceptions towards asylum seekers and refugees.

So that these children benefit from educational activities more effectively, it is important to evaluate all the variables that affect the environment they are studying. In particular, it will support the positive perceptions of their peers to accept Syrian students and support them to benefit from education activities more effectively. Therefore, this study, it is aimed to support the perceptions of primary school second-grade students towards Syrian refugees and refugees through children's books. For this purpose, answers were sought for the following sub-objectives.

1. Is there a statistically significant difference between the perception scores of Syrian refugees and refugees in the pre-test and post-test measurements of students in the experimental and control groups?
2. Do the perception scores of the students in the experimental and control group towards Syrian refugees and refugees differ statistically significantly according to the pre-test and post-test measurements?

Method

Research Design

This study was carried out with a quasi-experimental design of experimental research types. Karasar (2014) stated that quasi-experimental models are secondary experimental models in terms

of scientific value and can be used in cases where real experimental models cannot be provided, or they are not sufficient. In the literature, quasi-experimental models are specified in different ways. Quasi-experimental designs with pre-test and post-test control groups were used in the study. In this

context, the experimental and control groups were determined, and the application was carried out with the experimental group. It is possible to show the symbolic view of the experimental research pattern used in the research, as in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Symbolic Representation of the Quasi-Experimental Design

Study Groups	Group Assignment	Pre-test	Applied Program	Post-test
Experimental Group	R	S1.1	HBEP	S1.2
Control Group	R	S2.1	-----	S2.2

In Table 2, R indicates the subjects were assigned neutrally to the group (at this stage, each class was designated as a different group and assigned as an experimental group and a control group). In contrast, HBEP indicates the immigration perception program for primary school students integrated with stories. It also shows S1.1 and S2.1 pre-test measurements, S1.2 and S2.2 post-test measurements for the control and experimental group.

students who attended the second grade of a state primary school affiliated to the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education in the Güngören district of Istanbul and were selected through convenience sampling. The convenience sampling method was used in the study. A convenient sampling method can be utilized to minimize the loss of time, effort, and cost, and so that adds speed and practicality to the research (Patton, 2015). Detailed information about the participants of the research is presented in Table 3.

Participants

The participants of this study consist of 51

Table 3: Demographic Information Regarding the Gender of the Participants

Demographic Variables		Experimental Group		Control Group		Total	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Gender	Girl	12	46.2	16	61.5	28	54.9
	Boy	14	53.8	9	34.6	23	45.1
	Total	26	50.5	25	49.5	51	100.0

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the quantitative participants of the study consisted of 51 people, 28 of whom are girls (54.9%), and 23 are a boy (45.1%). A student in the experimental group was not included in the analysis because she filled in the scale data incorrectly.

Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire of Immigrant Perception for Primary School Students: The researchers prepared the questionnaire with expert opinion. The content validity index was calculated within the scope of expert opinion. The 20-item draft form regarding the scope and face validity was sent to two faculty members who studied immigrant perception and with Ph.D. and Ph.D. candidates, a faculty member with a doctorate in primary education, and a faculty member specialized in the field of language validity.

The experts were asked to evaluate the items in terms of “eligibility” “clarity,” and “comprehensibility” criteria and terms of their suitability for the sub-dimension containing the articles. Experts evaluated each item considering the Lawshe method according to three criteria: “appropriate,” “partially appropriate,” “inappropriate,” and the content validity index was determined. Content validity index (CVI) is obtained by “1” less than the ratio of the number of experts indicating the “required” opinion of any item to the total number of experts indicating the opinion of the article. In line with the opinions received from the experts, arrangements were made on the relevant items, and the measurement tool was given its final form. Based on the experts’ opinions regarding the items, the content validity index was calculated, and the findings were presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Results Regarding the Content Validity Index

Item Numbers	A	PA	I	CVI
Item 1	8	0	0	1.00
Item 2	8	0	0	1.00
.....
Item 20	5	2	1	0.25
Expert Number	8			
Content Validity Index (CVI)	0.90			

*A = Appropriate; PA = Partially Appropriate; I = Inappropriate; CVI = Content Validity Index.

Eight experts evaluated the pool of 20 items prepared according to Table 4, and the content validity index (CVI) was determined as .90.

Activities for Primary School Students Integrated with Children’s Books

Designing of Activities: The relevant literature was scanned, and programs and research articles on immigrant children were examined (Seydi, 2014; Rousseau, Drapeau and Corin, 1996; Besic & McBrien, 2012; O’Rourke, 2014; Cozolino, 2013; Poureslami, Nimmon, Cho, Foster & Hertzman, 2013; Vecchio, Dhillon and Ulmer, 2017; Hayward, 2017; Warner, 2017). As a result of the examinations, the needs of immigrant children were analyzed, and the education process was structured. The objectives of the activities are as follows: To raise awareness among primary school students towards immigrant children and change the perception of primary school students towards immigrant children positively.

For the educational program integrated with children’s books, researchers prepared activities and curriculum for immigrants and immigrant perception. The content of the children’s books, the number of pages, the formal and the content characteristics were determined by the age and personality characteristics of the children. While preparing the activities, principles such as repeating the previous information before the lesson started, handling the topics to be covered in connection with daily life, and preparing the activities based on games were considered. Activities are based on children’s books; activities include photography, painting, game activities, concept map, mind maps, and evaluation questions. Also, we had some criteria in the selection of the books. First, attention was paid to the authors of cultural writers in the selection of

the books. However, some books were translated into Turkish and stimulated to the culture. These works were chosen because they reflected empathy towards immigrant children. While choosing the books, attention was paid to the fact that the authors were awarded. Her child, the author, was a pioneer in children’s literature.

In the research, a pilot study was conducted with a different group before the main application. An 8-week work schedule was prepared by evaluating the measurement tools, children’s books, and the research process used in the research. Children’s books were read with the children every week. Throughout the implementation process, books on immigration and immigrants were given to children every week as additional study to read at home. All the books were evaluated by the “five w’s and one h” questions model; the plots in the books were discussed at the end of the lesson. A perception questionnaire for immigrant children prepared by the researchers was used to evaluate the learning outcomes—the prepared form aimed to determine the perceptions of Turkish primary school students towards Syrian immigrants. In addition, the prepared training program was sent to expert academicians, and expert opinion was received.

Validity of Activities: Opinions of two class teachers and five field experts were obtained for the activities prepared. Ten activities prepared for scope and appearance validity were sent to experts. Experts were asked to evaluate the suitability of the activities for primary school students and their suitability for the specified purposes. A table called “expert evaluation form” was attached to the end of each activity, and an informative article was written for the experts. The experts evaluated the activities as “appropriate,” “should be changed,” and “not

suitable / should be removed,” considering the Lawshe analysis method. Experts, who indicated the partially appropriate and not suitable / should be removed options, were asked to state their justifications and suggestions. The content validity index for the activities was calculated as .93. Also, in the study, children’s books (Annex-1) containing the themes of immigration, immigrants, and refugees were used, and the selected books were included in the study by obtaining expert opinion.

The practice of Activities: Before starting the research, necessary permissions (from parents, school management, and classroom teachers) were obtained. The immigrant perception questionnaire form was directed to all second classes, and two close classes were included in the study. While the lessons of experimental group students are conducted with activities integrated with the children’s books containing the subject of immigrants, the control group students did not receive any implementation.

The practices with the experimental group continued for 12 weeks, three days a week.

Collection of Data and Analysis

Collect data in the study, so that initially, the “immigrant perception questionnaire for primary school students” was given to the students in the control and experimental group, and pre-test data was obtained. Following the implementation of the immigration perception program integrated with the stories for primary school students, the immigration perception questionnaire for primary school students was given as a post-test to the experimental and control groups, and post-test data was obtained. The students answered the questions themselves, and each questionnaire took approximately 40 minutes. To determine the statistical technique (non-parametric, parametric) to be used in the analysis of quantitative data, the normality test was performed initially. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Normality Test Results

Groups	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Z	df	p	Z	df	p
Experimental Pre-test	.085	25	.200*	.965	25	.511
Experimental Post-test	.174	25	.058*	.936	25	.121
Control Pre-test	.125	25	.200*	.948	25	.228
Control Post-test	.104	25	.200*	.983	25	.931

*p>.05

According to Table 5, it was determined that all groups displayed normal distribution in the pre and post-tests. In addition, when the data are examined according to kurtosis and skewness values, the experimental group pre-test is determined between .04 and .46. Experimental group post-test .47 and .46. Control group pre-test .55 and .46. Control group post-test between .21 and .46. Regarding normal distribution, Tabachnick and Fidell (2015) state that kurtosis and skewness values’ being between -1.5 and +1.5 will meet the assumption of normality. In addition, variance homogeneity was examined by Levene’s test, and it was seen that the assumption was met. In line with this criterion, it is possible to

say that the data to be used in the study show normal distribution. In line with the results, independent samples and paired sample t-test were analyzed using statistical analysis methods.

Findings

In this study, which aims to determine the perceptions of Turkish primary school second-grade students towards Syrian students and to change their negative perceptions, the difference between the perceptions of students in the experimental and control groups towards Syrian students according to pre-test data is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Experimental and Control Groups between Pre and Post-Test Measurements Independent Samples t-test Results

Measurements	Groups	N	\bar{x}	SS	Sh \bar{x}	t Test		
						t	Sd	p
Pre-test	Experimental	25	19.76	3.82	.76	.71	48	.479
	Control	25	18.96	4.09	.82			
Post-test	Experimental	25	25.40	2.24	.45	6.76	48	.000*
	Control	25	19.68	3.59	.72			

*p<.01

When Table 6 is examined, the experimental group (= 19.76) and the control group (=18.96), displayed no statistically significant difference in the pre-test measurements of students' perception scores towards Syrian students (t= .71; p> .05). Additionally, the experimental group (=25.40) and the control group (=19.68) displayed a statistically

significant difference in favor of the students in the experimental group in the post-test measurements regarding the perception scores of Syrian students. (t= 6.76; p< .01). In addition, the shift between the pre and post-test measurement scores within the experimental group is displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Experimental and Control Group Pre and Post-test Measurements Paired Sample t-test Results

Groups	Measurements	\bar{x}	N	SS	Sh \bar{x}	t Test		
						t	Sd	p
Experimental group	Pre-test	19.76	25	3.82	.76	-6.62	24	.000*
	Post-test	25.40	25	2.24	.45			
Control group	Pre-test	18.96	25	4.09	.82	-.68	24	.501
	Post-test	19.68	25	3.59	.72			

*p<.01

When Table 7 is examined, it is determined that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test measurement scores of the experimental group students (t= -6.62; p< .01). Additionally, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between the perception scores of the control group students towards Syrian students between the pre and post-test measurement scores (t= -.68; p> .05).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the perceptions of Turkish primary school second second-grade students towards Syrian students and change their negative perceptions with children's books related to immigration. Primarily, the perceptions of the experimental and control group students towards Syrian refugee and asylum-seeking students were determined with the help of a questionnaire

Sprepared by the researchers before the experimental implementation. As a result of the analyzes, it was determined that the perceptions of Syrian students were similar in both groups.

It was determined that there was a statistically significant difference in favor of the students in the experimental group in the post-test measurements regarding the perception scores of Syrian students between the experimental group and the control group students. In line with this result, it is possible to say that educational activities integrated with children's books have positive effects on the perceptions of Turkish students. In addition, it was determined that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the perception scores of the experimental group students towards Syrian students. This result shows that the educational activities implemented have reached their goals. It was demonstrated that there

is no statistically significant difference between the control group students' perception scores of Syrian students between the pre-and post-test scores. As a result, it is concluded that activities integrated with children's books positively affect the perceptions of primary school students towards Syrian students.

One of the reasons why the findings of this study do not coincide with the literature is the lack of experimental studies to support the results of the study. However, some study findings indicate that intervention efforts are effective on immigrant children. Studies have been conducted especially with immigrant children. For example, Rousseau et al. (2007) found that the school-based drama therapy program for immigrant children mitigated children's behavioral problems and increased their academic success. Ogden et al. (2007) aimed to prevent problematic behaviors in immigrant children, and as a result of the study, they found that social competence reduced problem behaviors in children.

On the other hand, Ceballos & Bratton (2010) found positive changes in immigrant students' classroom behavior due to their intervention study. In his study with immigrant children, Sinclair (2001) stated that early education interventions contribute to children's emotional and social recovery. Education responses to refugees can potentially neutralize many of the risk factors that refugees face in the host country, such as post-migration violence, poor financial support, limited access to essential resources, and discrimination (Fazel et al., 2012). Therefore, the study findings point to the positive reflections of experimental practices on immigrant children. While a limited number of studies have been conducted on intervention studies to support the integration of immigrants, refugee reception contexts can be shaped by the programs, policies, and support provided (Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

In addition to its strengths, this study has some limitations as well. First of all, the study examined the perceptions of Turkish primary school students towards Syrian students in the context of children's books. Still, the views of other stakeholders such as teachers and parents were not addressed. In addition, the opinions of Syrian students have not been examined in this context. Based on the research results and limitations, we can express the

following suggestions. First of all, in the study, it was determined that children's books have positive changes in primary school students' perceptions of Syrian students. In this context, teachers can integrate children's books into their educational programs. Other studies to be conducted can examine this context from longitudinal and qualitative perspectives. In addition, the work to be carried out can be carried out by including Syrian students, parents, and teachers. Because in the coming years, it is predicted that immigrant children will become irreplaceable forces in the economies of recipient societies and will be indispensable for the future of care and support of rapidly aging non-immigrant populations (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004).

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Appendix

Book List Used in the Scope of the Study

Al Yanaklı Hasan Muzafferî ZGÜ Number of pages:133 Print Year: 2014	Göktenİnen Üç Yıldız Nur İÇGÖZÜ Number of pages: 111 Print Year: 2016	Benim Adım Hiç Kimse Frank Cotrell Boyce Number of pages: 120 Print Year: 2016	Juju Beni Unutma Çiğdem SEZER Number of pages: 72 Print Year: 2015
Bican'ın Alıntıları Hülya KİBAROĞLU Number of pages: 80 Print Year: 2014	Kömür Karası Çocuk Müge İPLİKÇİ Number of pages: 108 Print Year: 2014	Göçmen Kızı Kemalettin TUĞCU Number of pages: 108 Print Year: 2014	Kayıktaki Çocuk Maya MİZUNO, Vonne HEMELS Number of pages: 44 Print Year: 2017
Kuş Olsam Evime Uçsam Güzin ÖZTÜRK Number of pages: 117 Print Year: 2016	Küçük Göçmen Muhammed Rıza SERŞAR Number of pages: 64 Print Year:2015	Kuşların Başka Şarkı Söylediği Ülke ŞuleTANKUT Number of pages: 64 Print Year: 2016	Güneşin Doğduğu Yer Sadettin KAPLAN Number of pages: 62 Print Year: 1997
Horoz Adam veKorsan Sevim AK Number of pages: 134 Print Year: 2016	Yolculuk Francesca Sanna Number of pages: 44 Print Year: 2016	Benjamin Anna'yıSeviyor Peter HARTLING Number of pages: 109 Print Year: 2016	Taştan Adımlar MargrietRuurs, Nizar Ali Badr Print Year: 2019

Küçük Kemancı Elenor H. PORTER Number of pages: 96	Hoşgeldiniz Barroux Number of pages: 16 Print Year: 2017	Çabuksığınlar Jean-Claude GRUMBERG Number of pages: 86 Print Year: 2016	
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Author Details

Mustafa Erol, *YResearch Assistant, Yıldız Technical University, Faculty of Education, Department of Primary School Education, İstanbul, Turkey, Email ID: merol@yildiz.edu.tr.*

Şüheda Köstekçi, *Master's Degree, Yıldız Technical University, Faculty of Education, Department of Primary School Education, İstanbul, Turkey, Email ID: suhedak8@gmail.com.*

Ahmet Erol, *PhD, Pamukkale University, Faculty of Education, Department of Preschool Education, Denizli, Turkey, Email ID: ahmete@pau.edu.tr.*