

Preschool Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Türkiye: A Systematic Review and Thematic Analysis of the Current Literature

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Abstract: Preschool education plays a critical role in fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development of young children, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds. For Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, access to quality preschool education is not only a developmental need but also a key factor in their social integration and long-term well-being. The purpose of this systematic review and thematic analysis was to address a significant knowledge gap in the existing literature by synthesizing research on preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. A total of 23 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in this study. Findings revealed success stories that highlight the efficacy of tailored strategies, including dialogic book reading, summer school programs, social skills training, and parent training programs. However, the review also underscores a notable deficiency in intervention studies, emphasizing the need for further research in this critical area. The identified challenges span a wide spectrum, encompassing issues related to social integration, language barriers, teacher training, and complex cultural dynamics, which emphasizes the pressing need for holistic reforms in the education system and associated policies. In terms of practical implications, the study's findings highlight the importance of early intervention programs, parent empowerment initiatives, and efforts aimed at promoting social and cultural integration. The adoption of responsive curricula, accompanied by comprehensive teacher training, stands out as an essential component for nurturing inclusive and supportive preschool education. The recommendations derived from this systematic review and thematic analysis offer actionable insights for enhancing the quality of preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye.

Keywords: Preschool Education, Syrian Refugee Children, Türkiye, Systematic Review, Thematic Analysis

Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Mülteci Çocuklar için Okul Öncesi Eğitim: Sistematik Derleme ve Tematik Analiz

Öz: Okul öncesi eğitim, özellikle kırılgan geçmişe sahip küçük çocukların bilişsel, sosyal ve duygusal gelişimlerinin desteklenmesinde kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Türkiye'deki Suriyeli mülteci çocuklar için kaliteli okul öncesi eğitime erişim sadece gelişimsel bir ihtiyaç değil, aynı zamanda sosyal entegrasyonları ve uzun vadeli refahları için de kilit bir faktördür. Çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli mülteci çocukların okul öncesi eğitimine ilişkin araştırmaları sentezleyerek mevcut literatürdeki önemli bir bilgi boşluğunu doldurmaktır. Toplam 23 çalışma dahil edilme kriterlerini karşılamış ve bu çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Bulgular; etkileşimli kitap okuma, yaz okulu programları, sosyal beceri öğretimi ve ebeveyn eğitim programları gibi özel müdahalelerin mülteci çocukların eğitimlerinde etkili sonuçlar ortaya koyduğunu göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, çalışmanın bulguları müdahale araştırmalarının sınırlı sayıda olduğunu ve bu alanda daha fazla müdahale araştırması yapılması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Suriyeli mülteci çocukların okul öncesi eğitimine ilişkin belirlenen zorluklar; sosyal entegrasyon, dil engelleri, öğretmen eğitimi ve karmaşık kültürel dinamiklerle ilgili konuları kapsayan geniş bir yelpazeye yayılmakta ve eğitim sisteminde ve ilgili politikalarda bütünsel reformlara duyulan acil ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. Uygulamaya yönelik çıkarımlar açısından, çalışmanın bulguları erken müdahale programlarının, ebeveyn güçlendirme girişimlerinin ve sosyal ve kültürel entegrasyonu teşvik etmeye yönelik çabaların önemini vurgulamaktadır. Kapsamlı öğretmen eğitiminin eşlik ettiği farklılıklara duyarlı müfredatın benimsenmesi, kapsayıcı ve destekleyici okul öncesi eğitimi beslemek için temel bir bileşen olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, Türkiye'deki Suriyeli mülteci çocuklara yönelik okul öncesi eğitimin kalitesinin artırılması için uygulanabilir öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Okul Öncesi Eğitim, Suriyeli Mülteci Çocuklar, Türkiye, Sistematik Derleme, Tematik Analiz

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The ongoing conflict in Syria has resulted in a massive displacement of people, with many Syrians seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as Türkiye (Acarturk et al., 2021). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 2021, there were over 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees in Türkiye, making it the largest refugee-hosting country in the world (UNHCR, 2021). Of the 3.6 million externally displaced Syrians who are resettled in Türkiye, 1.1 million are young refugees in early childhood years (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2023). The majority of the refugee families and children tend to live in concentrated host communities across the Southeastern Anatolia region bordering with Northern Syria where the omnipresence of poverty restricts the availability of supportive family and educational services (Sakiz, 2016). This influx of refugees has created a range of challenges, including those related to education (Sakiz et al., 2025).

In Türkiye, the educational rights of refugees are protected by the Temporary Protection Regulation of 2014, which explicitly states that educational activities for foreigners, including Syrian refugees, are the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education (Temporary Protection Regulation, 2014). The Turkish government has made commendable efforts to ensure that Syrian children receive educational opportunities that meet the same standards and quality as those provided to Turkish children (UNICEF, 2019). These efforts include establishing schools in temporary accommodation centers and integrating refugee children into educational institutions outside of these centers. Notably, the number of Syrian refugee children attending schools in Türkiye has shown significant improvement over the years, increasing from 230,000 in the 2014-2015 academic year to 731,713 in the 2021-2022 academic year, as reported by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2022a). However, challenges persist in ensuring comprehensive access, maintaining curriculum progression, and achieving positive educational outcomes for Syrian children (Sakiz et al., 2025). Among preschool-age children living outside of camps in Turkey, 32% still do not attend any form of educational institution (MoNE, 2022b). This highlights the evolving nature of the situation, where while substantial progress has been made, challenges in enrollment and access to quality education remain.

Access to quality education plays an important role in the resettlement of refugee children in countries to which they migrate to (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Education as a fundamental human right is reinforced by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which emphasizes that children's development is shaped by multiple environmental systems, including their immediate family, school, and the broader socio-political context. In the case of refugee children, disruptions across these ecological systems impact their educational trajectories and makes structured early childhood education a crucial factor in their adaptation and well-being. Considering that the biggest victims of war are young children who migrate to different countries with their families, it is very important that these children are included in the education systems immediately. This aligns with Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky et al., 1978), which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive and language development. For refugee children, learning within a structured preschool environment can facilitate their integration by enabling guided interactions with teachers and peers in their host communities. Especially, preschool education plays a very important role in helping children develop a sense of belonging in a new setting, adapting to a new culture, learning a new language, and establishing new social relationships (Bosqui & Marshoud, 2018). For many refugee children, preschool represents their first exposure to the culture of their host nation.

The early years of life are widely recognized as a critical period for children's development, as they serve as the foundation for their social, emotional, and cognitive growth. Moreover, early childhood education can be an effective tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting long-term social and economic benefits (Bakken et al., 2017). Studies have shown that investing in early childhood education can lead to significant returns on investment, including reductions in health care costs, decreased reliance on social welfare programs, and increased productivity in the workforce (Duncan & Magnuson, 2013). Furthermore, Resilience Theory (Masten, 2014) highlights how early childhood education can serve as a protective factor for refugee children and foster adaptive coping strategies in the face of adversity. Structured learning environments provide predictability and stability, key elements in counteracting the psychological effects of forced displacement. For refugee children, early childhood education can provide a safe and supportive inclusive

environment that promotes their well-being and helps them to adapt to new surroundings. It can also offer stability and routine amid displacement and uncertainty. In addition, it provides opportunities for socialization, play, and learning that are critical for their development (Arabacioglu & Bagceli-Kahraman, 2020). By investing in inclusive early childhood education for refugee children, there is the potential to yield long-term benefits not only for the children but also for the communities in which they live, fostering an inclusive and harmonious society (Sakiz, 2016).

Providing quality preschool education for refugee children, however, requires careful planning, coordination, and collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and local communities, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity (Durable Solutions Platform and Migration Policy Institute, 2021). The development of effective and sustainable interventions requires a nuanced understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by refugee children and their families, as well as the cultural and contextual factors that shape their experiences (Erdemir, 2022a).

While a growing body of research has delved into the education of Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, it is noteworthy that fewer studies have placed a specific focus on preschool education. Notwithstanding the presence of individual studies addressing preschool education for refugee children in Türkiye, a conspicuous void exists—a comprehensive review of literature that synthesizes and consolidates the collective insights garnered from research endeavors within this field. This review aims to fulfill this crucial gap, aiming to furnish an all-encompassing synthesis of the existing literature concerning preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. By focusing on the preschool age group, our study aims to shed light on the nuanced contours of the challenges and opportunities that Syrian refugee children face at this pivotal juncture of their development. Beyond mere documentation, this systematic review seeks to identify effective interventions and practices that support the provision of quality preschool education to Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. These findings hold the potential to inform the formulation of policy and practice in the realm of refugee education. To fulfill these overarching objectives, our study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the key characteristics of studies focusing on preschool education for Syrian refugee children, their families, and teachers in Türkiye?
2. What are the success stories and positive outcomes observed in the context of preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye?
3. What are the challenges experienced by Syrian refugee children, their families, and teachers in relation to preschool education in Türkiye?
4. What recommendations and insights emerge from the existing literature to improve preschool education services for Syrian refugee children and their families in Türkiye?

Method

The present study employs an integrative and systematic methodology to comprehensively review the existing literature pertaining to preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. This combined approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative evidence (Sandelowski et al., 2007), recognizing the need to capture the richness of insights and data sources available in the literature. Simultaneously, it adheres to the principles of a systematic review, designed to identify and synthesize the most relevant and reliable evidence to address specific research inquiries (Dickson et al., 2017).

Systematic reviews involve a structured and transparent process to minimize bias, ensure repeatability, and enhance the validity of findings. In accordance with these principles, this study follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA guidelines provide a framework for transparently reporting each stage of the systematic review

process, from study identification and screening to data extraction and synthesis. Adherence to these guidelines strengthens the rigor and transparency of our review.

Thematic analysis, a qualitative research method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, is employed to extract and synthesize key qualitative insights from the included studies. This approach enables a deeper exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and contexts of Syrian refugee children, their families, and educators regarding preschool education in Türkiye. Thematic analysis is particularly valuable in identifying themes within qualitative data, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By integrating the principles of systematic review with thematic analysis, this study aims to provide a holistic and evidence-based overview of the current state of preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, while also capturing the context-specific insights that qualitative research offers.

Article Search

The literature search was conducted in December 2022, encompassing the period from March 2011 to December 2022, aligning with the onset of the civil war in Syria. The review process unfolded in two stages. In the initial stage, comprehensive searches were performed across various databases, including “TR Index, Academic Search Complete, the Educational Resources Information Center, ProQuest, PsychINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science.” These databases were selected to encompass a wide range of academic and multidisciplinary sources.

For the primary database search, a carefully crafted set of keywords in both Turkish and English was employed to maximize search coverage. The keywords included: (refugee*) OR (asylum seeker*) OR (displaced) OR (migrant*) OR (immigrant*) OR (emigration) AND (Syrian) AND (preschool). This search strategy was designed to capture all relevant studies focusing on preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. This database search yielded a total of 619 studies. Additionally, in the subsequent stage, an ancestral search within the bibliographies of studies that met the inclusion criteria was conducted, identifying an additional seven relevant studies, bringing the total to 626 studies.

After careful examination, we excluded 157 studies due to duplication. Subsequently, we screened the titles and abstracts of the remaining 469 studies, leading to the exclusion of 393 that did not align with the predefined inclusion criteria. The remaining 76 studies underwent a full-text review. During this phase, we determined that 53 studies did not meet our inclusion criteria. After this selection process, 23 studies were deemed eligible for further analysis and inclusion in our systematic review. The process of identifying, screening, and selecting studies is visually represented in Figure 1 through a PRISMA flow diagram.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The current study applied specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to determine the studies suitable for inclusion. The inclusion criteria encompassed the following elements: (a) the study focused on Syrian preschool children, their family members, or educators, (b) the full-text of the study was available in either Turkish or English, (c) the geographical focus of the study was restricted to Türkiye, and (d) the study was published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Conversely, certain studies were excluded from consideration based on the following exclusion criteria: (a) Studies that examined Syrian children, their family members, or educators in contexts outside of preschool education were excluded from this review, and (b) studies focusing on refugee groups other than Syrians, including those originating from Afghanistan, Iraq, or other regions, were omitted from this review.

Review Procedures

The article review process consisted of three phases. First, two separate coding forms were developed to extract data from the qualifying articles by the first and third authors. Second, the primary coder (second author) was trained in using the coding forms before starting to review the studies included in the current study. Third, qualifying studies were reviewed to extract relevant data using these forms.

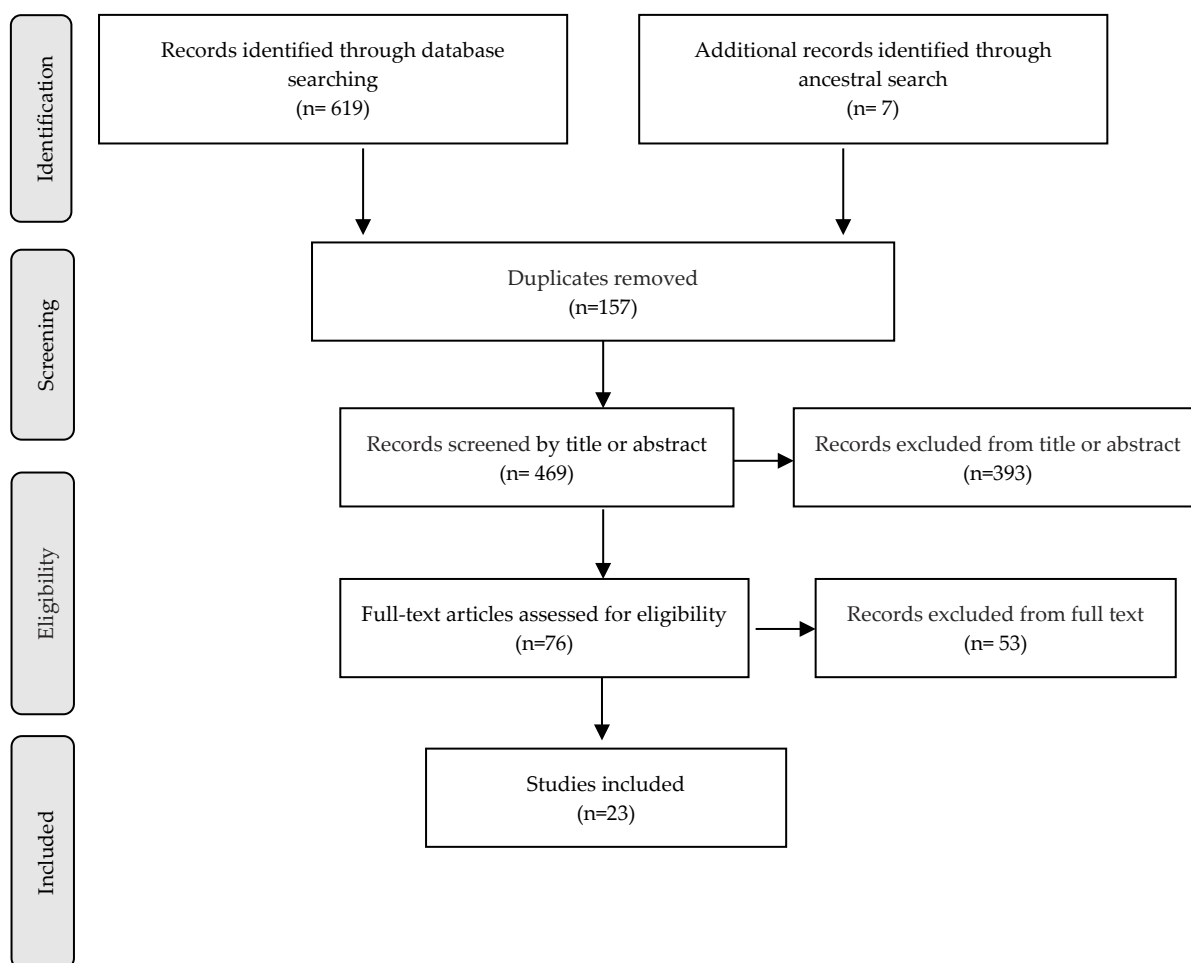


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart

Development of the Coding Forms

The review process involved two distinct coding forms tailored to capture key characteristics of the studies and extract and code pertinent data related to study objectives, main outcomes, challenges, and recommendations. The first coding form included sections for recording details such as the study author(s), publication year, geographical focus, research design, participant demographics, ethical considerations, and the use of interpreters during the study. The second coding form was specifically designed to extract data related to the success stories and positive outcomes reported, challenges faced, and recommendations proposed regarding preschool education for refugee children.

Training of Coders

Before commencing the actual coding for the current review, two coders underwent a structured training. This training involved a detailed review of the coding form and descriptions, coding practice using a sample article, and extensive discussions to resolve discrepancies or uncertainties. Throughout this training phase, the first author provided Feedback and guidance. Each coder was required to code a minimum of three additional articles, with feedback provided until interrater agreement reached or exceeded the 80% threshold.

Interrater Agreement for Coding

Upon successful completion of the training phase, one designated coder proceeded to code all studies meeting the inclusion criteria (23 studies in total). To evaluate the accuracy and consistency of the primary coding process, a secondary coder independently coded a subset of the studies (8 studies; 35%) using the same coding forms. Interrater agreement was calculated by dividing the number of agreements for each code by the total number of agreements plus disagreements, then multiplying by 100. The interrater agreement was 98%,

with disagreements, when they occurred, resolved through careful examination of the articles and discussions with the first author.

Data Analysis

A qualitative meta-summary technique was used to synthesize the findings of qualitative and quantitative research (Sandelowski et al., 2007). The theoretical background of this technique is based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Thematic analysis consists of six stages and aims to identify important themes related to the phenomenon or situation under study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These stages include (a) familiarization with data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report. The data extracted from the articles using the second coding form were analyzed using the thematic analysis procedures. The six stages of thematic analysis were rigorously applied in this systematic review. Initially, a detailed review of the extracted data from the selected articles was conducted, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the material. The data were then subjected to initial coding, where meaningful segments and patterns within the data were identified and labeled with initial codes. This stage facilitated the organization and categorization of the data. Through a systematic process of data exploration, patterns, and recurring concepts were identified. Themes began to emerge as clusters of related codes, offering insights into the key dimensions of the research topic. The identified themes were critically reviewed and refined. This involved examining the relationships between themes, ensuring that they accurately captured the essence of the data, and refining the thematic structure. The themes were then clearly defined and named to succinctly represent the content and meaning they conveyed. This step helped crystallize the thematic framework. The final thematic analysis was documented in a structured report, summarizing the key themes, their interpretations, and their relevance to the research questions. This report formed the foundation for the synthesis of findings in this systematic review.

To enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the thematic analysis, several strategies were employed. These included researcher triangulations, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail. Researcher triangulation involved multiple researchers independently coding and analyzing the data to reduce potential bias and enhance the credibility of the findings. Member checking was also performed by involving participants or experts in the field to validate the interpretations of the themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was maintained to document the decision-making process and provide transparency in the analysis. Together, these strategies contributed to the rigor and trustworthiness of the thematic analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

This systematic review and thematic analysis included 23 studies aimed at investigating critical issues concerning the preschool education of Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. The findings are organized based on the research questions that guided our review. Specifically, we first explored the key characteristics of the studies that investigated preschool education for Syrian refugee children, their families, and teachers in Türkiye. Subsequently, we identified the success stories and positive outcomes observed within the context of preschool education for this demographic. We then analyzed the challenges experienced by Syrian refugee children, their families, and educators regarding preschool education in Türkiye. Finally, we presented recommendations and insights that emerged from this body of literature, shedding light on potential avenues for enhancing preschool education services for Syrian refugee children and their families in Türkiye. The presentation of results from the thematic analysis followed a deliberate order determined by the researchers, considering the perceived importance of the themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that the number of instances of a theme does not inherently signify its greater significance.

Key Characteristics of Studies

In the following section, we describe the key characteristics of the studies, which include their geographic distribution of research within Türkiye, research design and focus, participant demographics, and ethical considerations. Table 1 provides a visual summary of these key characteristics across the included

studies.

Location

The geographical distribution of the studies demonstrated a significant focus on regions neighboring the Syrian border, including Sanliurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis, Mardin, and Sirnak, which have experienced substantial migration during and after the war. Additionally, research efforts extended to various other provinces such as Adiyaman, Istanbul, Diyarbakir, Batman, Ankara, Samsun, Mersin, and Afyonkarahisar. Notably, no specific regional information was provided in three studies.

Research Design and Focus

The methodological approach employed across the 23 studies revealed a predominance of qualitative research designs, accounting for the majority (n=17; 74%) of the investigations. Within qualitative research, case studies (n=8) and phenomenological studies (n=3; 13%) were the most frequently employed designs. Other research methods included experimental research (n=3; 13%) and mixed-method research (n=3; 13%). It is noteworthy that a substantial portion (n=19; 83%) of these studies aimed to depict the current state of preschool education for refugee children, while a more limited number sought to assess the impact of intervention programs.

Participant Demographics

Regarding the participant groups, nearly half of the studies (n=11; 48%) involved both Syrian and Turkish preschool children, highlighting the importance of studying interactions between these groups. Subsequently, seven studies (30%) were conducted with the participation of teachers, while three studies (13%) centered around mothers of the preschool children. Moreover, two studies encompassed a diverse set of participants, including teachers, school administrators, refugee children, and their mothers. In total, these studies featured 1,903 participants, comprising Syrian children (n=731), Turkish children (n=510), preschool teachers (n=152), and mothers of both Syrian children (n=270) and Turkish children (n=240). The age of child participants ranged between 18 and 72 months, teachers' ages ranged between 24 and 46 years, and mothers' ages ranged between 20 and 51 years. In five studies, information regarding participants' age was not provided.

Gender distribution among child participants revealed that 144 Syrian boys and 154 Syrian girls, as well as 69 Turkish boys and 47 Turkish girls, took part in the studies. In one study, gender information for child participants was not available. Among the teacher participants, 107 were female, and 8 were male, with varying educational levels spanning from bachelor's to master's degrees. Similarly, mothers of Turkish and Syrian children represented diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from illiteracy to university degrees.

Ethical Considerations and Interpreter Use

Regarding ethical considerations, seven studies (30%) explicitly stated that they had obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, while five studies (22%) reported obtaining permissions from the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, or the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay). In addition, eight studies (35%) noted obtaining informed consent from the participants. In contrast, seven studies did not provide specific details regarding IRB approval, permissions from legal authorities, or consent from participants. Furthermore, interpreter support was noted to facilitate communication in 13 studies (57%). The remaining studies either did not utilize an interpreter (n=7; 30%) or did not report whether an interpreter was employed (n=3; 13%).

Table 1. *Descriptive Features of Studies*

Author / Location	Study Design	Study focus	Participants				Approval	Interp.
			Number/Role	Age	Gender	Education Level		
Ustundag & Senol, 2023 / -	Simultaneous mixed method	Children	44 Turkish Children 6 Syrian Children	60-72 m	Turkish: 13 F / 31 M Syrian: 4 F / 2 M	Kindergarten	IRB	NA
Erdemir, 2022a Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa, Mardin	Phenomenological study	Parents	30 Syrian Mothers 20 Local mothers	M _{age} = 29 Syrian M _{age} = 31 Local	60 F	Low education level	Consents of participant	Y
Erdemir, 2022b -	Qualitative interview study	Children	36 Syrian children	60-72 m	18 F / 18 M	Kindergarten	Consents of participant	Y
*Erdemir, 2022c Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Adiyaman, Sanliurfa, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Batman, Siirt, Sirnak	A pretest-posttest quasi-experimental research design with the intervention and the control group	Children	Intervention group: 190 Syrian Refugee + 168 local children Control group: 183 Syrian Children + 170 local children	M _{age} = 5.11int. M _{age} = 5.8 control	Intervention: 172 F / 186 M Comparison: 155 F / 198 M	Kindergarten	Consents of participant	Y
*Akca & Aslisen, 2022 Gaziantep	Randomized design with the pretest-posttest control group	Children	32 Syrian Children	48-66 m	15 F / 17 M	Kindergarten	IRB- Consents of participant	Y
Gundogdu & Yildiz, 2022 / -	Case study	Teacher	22 Preschool teachers	31-46 y	22 F	NA	IRB	N
Ozoruc & Dikici-Sigirtmac, 2022 Gaziantep	Case study	Teacher	11 Preschool teachers	NA	9 F / 2 M	NA	IRB	N
Erdemir, 2021 Istanbul	Grounded theory	Parents	32 Syrian mothers	NA	32 F	Compulsory education- University graduate	Consents of mother	Y
Ayas et al., 2022 Ankara	Case-control study	Children	60 Turkish children 60 Syrian children	18-72 m	NA	Kindergarten	IRB/MoIA/ MoH Consent	Y
Gulluce & Uyanik, 2020 Sanliurfa	Relational survey model	Children	77 Syrian children	48-60 m	36 F / 41 M	Kindergarten	MoNE Consents	NA
Ozger & Kozandagi, 2021 Kahramanmaras	Ethnographic case research	Children	12 Turkish children 6 Syrian children	48-60 m	Turkish: 5 F / 7 M Syrian: 5 F / 1 M	Kindergarten	NA	Y

Author / Location	Study Design	Study focus	Participants				Approval	Interp.
			Number/Role	Age	Gender	Education Level		
Duran-Yilmaz & Omeroglu, 2021 Adiyaman, Kilis, Sanliurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay	Phenomenology design	Teacher	24 Preschool teachers	NA	NA	NA	IRB	N
Simsar, 2021 Kilis	Case Study	Teacher	58 Preschool teachers	NA	53 F / 5 M	Undergraduate (12) Bachelor's degree (46)	NA	N
Mizikaci et al., 2021 Gaziantep	Mixed method	Children	39 Syrian children	52-78 m	20 F / 19 M	Kindergarten	Kızılay Consent	Y
*Arabacioglu & Bagceli-Kahraman, 2020/Kilis	Pretest-posttest with the control group design	Children	34 Syrian children 18 (control) / 16 (intervention)	60-69 m	16 F / 18 M	Kindergarten	MoNE and Consents of participant	Y
Bagceli-Kahraman & Arabacioglu, 2020 Kilis	Descriptive method and survey model	Children	50 Turkish children 51 Syrian children	60 m	Turkish: 24 F / 26 M Syrian: 32 F / 19 M	Kindergarten	NA	NA
Alabay & Ersal, 2020 Istanbul	Case Study	Teacher	9 Preschool teachers	24-39 y	8 F / 1 M	Undergraduate (2) Bachelor's degree (6)/Master's degree (1)	IRB, MoNE consent	N
Yalcin & Simsar, 2020 Kilis	Phenomenology	Children Parents Teacher	10 Syrian parents 5 Preschool teachers 1 Principals	27-42 y 27-42 y 43 y	NA	NA	Consent of participant	Y
Ozger & Akansel, 2019 Kahramanmaras	Case study	Children	10 Turkish children 7 Syrian children	60 m	Turkish: 5 F / 5 M Syrian: 3 F / 4 M	Kindergarten	Consents of participant	Y
Dogrul & Akay, 2019 Mersin	Case study	Parents	220 Turkish parents 190 Syrian parents	20-51 y	Turkish: 15 F /105 M Syrian: 95 F / 95 M	Illiterate - University graduate	NA	Y
Aydin & Kurtulmus, 2018/Sanliurfa	Qualitative study	Teacher	15 Preschool teachers	24-32 y	15 F	Bachelor's degree	NA	N
*Can-Yasar et al., 2018 Afyonkarahisar	Mixed method	Children Mother Teacher	10 Syrian children 8 Mothers 1 Preschool teacher	48-66 m (children)	5 F / 5 M (Children)	Mothers: Illiterate (4) / literate (4) Teacher: Bachelor's degree		
Mercan-Uzun & Butun, 2016/Samsun	Qualitative study	Teacher	6 Preschool teachers	NA	NA	NA	NA	N

*Intervention research

Note: m: month; y: year; F: female; M: male; NA: not available; Y: yes; N: no; Interp: interpreter; IRB: Institutional Review Board; MoIA: Ministry of Internal Affairs; MoH: Ministry of Health

Success Stories and Positive Outcomes

Thematic analysis focusing on the positive outcomes observed in the context of preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye revealed eight sub-themes categorized under three overarching themes. Table 2 provides an overview of these themes and sub-themes, indicating the studies in which they were addressed.

Effective Enrichment Strategies

Our analysis revealed that a range of strategies has played a pivotal role in enhancing the preschool education of Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. These strategies are designed to improve language development, foster resilience, support emotional well-being, and promote social integration. One highly effective approach involves *interactive dialogic book reading programs*, which have demonstrated significant benefits for the receptive language skills of young Syrian children. Through engaging children in interactive reading sessions, both educators and parents can create an environment that fosters language skill development. This enhances linguistic abilities and encourages a love for learning and reading. *Summer preschool programs* have emerged as powerful tools for nurturing the holistic development of refugee children. These programs provide a structured and supportive environment that enhances overall well-being, prepares children for formal education, and fosters resilience. The implementation of *social skills training programs* has yielded positive outcomes by enhancing the social-emotional adjustment, social skills, and problem-solving abilities of Syrian children. These programs equip children with essential skills necessary to navigate complex social dynamics, establish meaningful relationships, and integrate effectively into their new educational environments.

Strategies aimed at *empowering parents* through insights into the Turkish education system and Turkish language courses are pivotal in ensuring the success of refugee children in preschool. When parents are equipped with knowledge and language skills, they become active partners in their children's educational journeys. This improves communication between schools and families and fosters a supportive home environment where learning is encouraged and valued. Collectively, these effective enrichment strategies contribute to a more inclusive and supportive preschool experience for Syrian refugee children. By addressing linguistic, developmental, and social needs, these strategies empower young learners to overcome challenges and build a strong foundation for their future education.

Table 2. Concept matrix

Themes		Sub-themes (St) Author(s)	Üstündağ & Şenol, 2023	Erdemir, 2022a	Erdemir, 2022b	Erdemir, 2022c	Akça & Aslışen, 2022	Gündoğdu & Yıldız, 2022	Özoruç & Dikici- Sığrırtmaç, 2022	Erdemir, 2021	Ayas et al., 2022	Güllüce & Uyanık, 2021	Özger & Kozaandagı, 2021	Duran-Yılmaz & Ömeroglu, 2021	Simsar, 2021	Mızrakcı et al., 2021	Arabacıoğlu & Bağçeli-Kahraman, 2020	Bağçeli-Kahraman & Arabacıoğlu, 2020	Alabay & Ersal, 2020	Yalçın & Simsar, 2020	Özger & Akansel, 2019	Doğrul & Akay, 2019	Aydın & Kurtulmuş, 2018	Can-Yaşar et al., 2018	Mercan-Uzun & Bütün, 2016
Success Stories and Positive Outcomes	Effective Enrichment Strategies	StEES-1					X																		
		StEES-2				X																			
		StEES-3																							
		StEES-4		X																X	X				
	Promoting Social Integration	StPSI-1	X									X	X	X			X						X	X	X
		StPSI-2	X				X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X	X
		StPSI-3			X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Challenges	Social Integration and Acceptance	StSIA-1							X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X				
		StSIA-2	X						X		X	X	X	X						X	X		X		X
		StEB-1							X		X		X			X			X	X				X	
		StEB-2								X	X					X								X	
		StEB-3	X					X																X	
	Educational Barriers	StEB-4			X			X																X	
		StEB-5			X				X										X					X	
		StTCI-1							X					X	X								X		X
		StTCI-2							X			X		X		X							X		
		StCCD-1								X	X		X						X		X		X		
	Cross-Cultural Dynamics	StCCD-2	X								X									X	X		X		
		StCCD-3			X				X		X			X							X		X		X
		StCCD-4			X					X				X					X				X		X
		StWA-1									X				X	X							X		X
		StWA-2						X			X				X					X			X		X
Suggestions	Enhancing Child Development	StECD-1	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X			X		X		X		X		X
		StECD-2	X	X							X	X		X										X	
		StECD-3									X														
	Supporting Integration of Children and Families	StSICF-1		X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		
		StSICF-2					X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	
		StCEP-1	X		X	X		X	X				X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Curriculum and Educational Policies	StCEP-2			X	X		X	X					X	X	X		X			X				
		StCEP-3			X	X		X						X						X				X	

Note: StEES-1: Interactive Dialogic Book Reading Programs; StEES-2: Summer Preschool Programs; StEES-3: Social Skills Training Programs; StEES-4: Empowering Parents; StPSI-1: Relationship Building; StPSI-2: Enhanced Peer Culture; StPSI-3: Community Integration; StSIA-1: Peer Relations; StSIA-2: Exclusion and Stigmatization; StEB-1: Language and Communication; StEB-2: Developmental and Health Issues; StEB-3: Education System Constraints; StEB-4: Educational Policies; StEB-5: Teacher Training and Support; StTCI-1: Language and Communication Challenges for Teachers; StTCI-2: Behavioral Challenges for Teachers; StCCD-1: Cultural Differences; StCCD-2: Integration and Cultural Clashes; StCCD-3: Prejudices and Stereotypes; StCCD-4: Cultural Competence; StWA-1: Physical and Psychological Health; StWA-2: Financial Challenges for Refugee Families; StECD-1: Early Intervention Programs; StECD-2: Training for Families; StECD-3: Social Skills Development; StSICF-1: Social and Cultural Integration; StSICF-2: Language Integration; StCEP-1: Responsive Curricula; StCEP-2: Education Policies; StCEP-3: Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Promoting Social Integration

Promoting social integration for Syrian refugee children and their families is essential, as it cultivates a sense of belonging and acceptance within their new communities. By fostering positive relationships, peer culture, and community interactions, these initiatives help mitigate the sense of isolation and displacement that refugee children may experience. Furthermore, social integration enhances cultural understanding, promotes social cohesion, and creates an inclusive environment where both refugees and host communities can learn from one another and thrive together.

Our analysis revealed that *relationship building* through engaging plays and outdoor activities played a crucial role in fostering positive connections among children from both Turkish and Syrian backgrounds. These activities created opportunities for children to form friendships and establish meaningful relationships within the preschool environment. These connections were pivotal in fostering social integration and a sense of belonging among a diverse group of children. Through collaborative play and shared experiences, children transcended cultural differences, leading to stronger bonds and greater mutual understanding.

Inclusive teaching approaches, positive teacher-child interactions, and continuous support from Syrian families collectively contributed to an *enriched peer culture* within preschool settings. Teachers played a central role in creating an inclusive atmosphere where all children felt valued and respected, irrespective of their backgrounds. This positive teacher-child dynamic fostered a sense of security and belonging, enabling children to adapt to the school environment more easily. Additionally, the active involvement and support of Syrian families further reinforced this positive peer culture, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and unity among all students.

Additionally, our analysis highlighted the significant impact of organizing out-of-school activities that brought together Turkish and Syrian families. These initiatives were instrumental in fostering cross-cultural interactions, understanding, and camaraderie among different communities. By providing opportunities for families to connect and engage, these activities contributed significantly to *community integration*. They played a vital role in breaking down cultural barriers and building bridges among populations with distinct backgrounds and experiences. The resulting sense of unity and shared purpose within the community was a testament to the power of such initiatives in promoting social integration.

Empowerment and Resilience

Our analysis revealed the presence of diverse cultural wealth capitals among refugee children, which include navigational, social, familial, linguistic, resistant, and aspirational capital. These capitals serve as a testament to the multifaceted strengths, agency, and resilience of refugee children as they navigate their educational journeys and adjust to new lives in resettlement communities. Significantly, these capitals also demonstrate the children's unwavering commitment to social and racial justice, as they actively advocate against the inequalities stemming from forced displacement, xenophobia, and social exclusion.

Challenges Experienced

In our thematic analysis of the challenges faced by Syrian refugee children, their families, and educators concerning preschool education in Türkiye, we identified five overarching themes that encapsulate the multifaceted difficulties encountered within this context. Table 2 presents a list of the themes and sub-themes, along with an indication of whether they were addressed in the studies included in this review.

Social Integration and Acceptance

This overarching theme sheds light on the challenges surrounding the social integration and acceptance of refugee children within Turkish society. This critical aspect of their preschool experience encompasses various issues, and our analysis has revealed some prominent issues. A salient challenge within this theme revolves around *peer relations*. Notably, negative perceptions held by some Turkish parents towards Syrian families and their children had noticeable repercussions on peer relationships. These negative attitudes

influenced the way Turkish children interacted with their Syrian counterparts, creating barriers to social integration. The impact of these perceptions went beyond mere hesitation and sometimes led to *exclusion and stigmatization*. Another aspect of this theme was the observation of popular children in the class actively responding to the presence of Syrian children. In certain instances, these influential children were seen making deliberate efforts to shape relationships with their Turkish peers in response to the Syrian children's presence. This phenomenon highlighted the complex dynamics at play in the classroom. It showed how perceptions, attitudes, and interactions between children could significantly impact the social integration and acceptance of Syrian refugee children within their peer groups.

Educational Barriers

This theme delves into the multidimensional challenges within the educational system that hinder the access of refugee children to quality education. Our analysis has unveiled several sub-themes that collectively paint a comprehensive picture of the obstacles faced in this realm. One of the most significant sub-themes in this category is the *language and communication challenges*. Many refugee children struggle with limited Turkish language skills, making it challenging for them to effectively communicate with their teachers and peers. The absence of Arabic translation further complicates the communication landscape, limiting their ability to access educational resources. These language differences sometimes extend to play activities, where Turkish children, driven by linguistic barriers, exclude their Syrian peers. This exclusion exacerbates the existing issues related to integration and acceptance, creating an additional layer of complexity.

Another prominent sub-theme that emerged is the cluster of *developmental and health issues* faced by refugee children. The challenges in this domain are diverse and interconnected. The cumulative impact of trauma, language barriers, and difficulties adapting to a new environment was found to contribute to developmental delays among these children. Additionally, physical development problems, deficits in psychomotor skills, speech difficulties, and shyness were observed. These interconnected challenges underscore the multifaceted nature of barriers to quality preschool education for refugee children.

The sub-theme of *education system constraints* highlights inadequacies within the Turkish education system that pose challenges to supporting refugee children effectively. Notably, our analysis revealed shortcomings in the preschool education program, particularly in its capacity to provide adequate support for self-care skills. This deficiency creates hurdles in delivering a comprehensive educational experience for refugee children, potentially limiting their overall development. Within the *educational policy* sub-theme, significant challenges were identified. There is a recurring call for policy changes to better address the educational needs of migrant children. Concerns have been raised about the lack of adaptation of existing educational policies to effectively support and integrate refugee children into the educational system. This sub-theme points to the critical role that policy reform plays in ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children, regardless of their background.

The sub-theme of *teacher training and support* reveals significant challenges arising from the inadequate preparation and ongoing support provided to educators in addressing the specific needs of refugee children. These issues encompass a range of dimensions, including teachers' limited knowledge about these children and their families, difficulties stemming from language differences, and the absence of effective teaching techniques tailored to the unique requirements of this student population. Teachers often find themselves grappling with the dual challenges of limited knowledge and insufficient resources to effectively teach and support refugee children. Inadequate teaching methods and techniques adapted for migrant children further compound these challenges. This sub-theme indicates the critical importance of comprehensive training and ongoing professional development opportunities for educators. Such training and support are pivotal in enabling teachers to create and maintain an inclusive and supportive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all children, including those from refugee backgrounds. By addressing these challenges, educators can better equip themselves to foster an atmosphere where refugee children can thrive academically and socio-emotionally, thus promoting their overall well-being and successful integration into the educational system.

Teacher-Child Interactions

This theme shed lights on the intricate interactions that unfold between teachers and Syrian refugee children within the preschool educational context. It captures various dimensions, including language and communication challenges for teachers and behavioral dynamics within the classroom. *Language and communication challenges* for teachers emerged as a significant issue in teacher-child interactions. These challenges often stemmed from teachers struggling to effectively communicate with non-Turkish-speaking students and parents. Language barriers hindered the fluidity of communication within the classroom, impacting the quality of education and support provided to refugee children. Teachers, at times, found themselves facing linguistic barriers that impeded their capacity to convey knowledge and facilitate effective interactions. The sub-theme of *behavioral challenges* placed a spotlight on the complexities faced by teachers in managing behavior problems and maintaining a conducive learning environment. Instances were noted where both Turkish and Syrian children displayed confrontational behavior and expressed grievances about their peers. This dimension underscores the difficulty teachers face in balancing the diverse needs and behaviors of their students, particularly in the context of cultural diversity and language differences.

Cross-Cultural Dynamics

This overarching theme explores the complex dynamics surrounding cultural differences and interactions among teachers, Turkish children, and refugee children within the educational context. It encompasses several sub-themes that shed light on the multifaceted challenges posed by these cultural dynamics, including cultural differences, cultural clashes, and the prevalence of prejudices and stereotypes held by various stakeholders.

Within this theme, the *cultural differences* among individuals from diverse backgrounds led to misunderstandings and complexities in their interactions. Such differences often created barriers between teachers, refugee children, and their families, impacting the quality of the educational experience for these young learners. Sub-themes within this theme focused on the processes of *integration and cultural clashes*. Refugee children faced significant challenges while attempting to integrate into Turkish society due to stark cultural differences. These challenges often manifested as behaviors influenced by distinct cultural norms and the development of misunderstandings among their Turkish peers. The juxtaposition of contrasting cultural backgrounds contributed to the complexity of these interactions and highlighted the need for more inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches within the educational environment. Another significant aspect of this theme revolves around the prevalence of *prejudices and stereotypes*. These biases were observed among teachers, Turkish children, and parents, creating additional hurdles for refugee children and their families. Notably, some teachers held biases against refugee children, which could impact the quality of education and the overall well-being of these young learners.

A critical sub-theme that permeates these cultural dynamics is the need for *cultural competence* among educators and educational institutions. Cultural competence entails the ability to navigate the complexities of multicultural classrooms effectively. It emphasizes the necessity for teachers to receive comprehensive training that equips them to work harmoniously with diverse student groups, fostering an inclusive and respectful educational environment. In our analysis, it became evident that cultivating cultural competence among educators and stakeholders is paramount to addressing the challenges posed by cultural differences and interactions. This competence requires an understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of all children, regardless of their origins. By fostering cultural competence, schools can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment that promotes positive interactions and enhances the well-being of all students, regardless of their cultural identities. Within the context of cultural competence, we observed instances where negative attitudes held by teachers toward refugee children presented additional challenges. These attitudes often manifested as biases or stereotypes, potentially impacting the quality of interactions and the overall learning experiences of Syrian refugee children. Thus, countering these negative attitudes through cultural competence training becomes instrumental in fostering an environment where refugee children can thrive academically and contribute positively to the broader community.

Well-being and Access

Within this theme, we uncovered a spectrum of challenges affecting the overall well-being of Syrian refugee children and their access to vital services. This theme encompassed sub-themes that shed light on the *physical and psychological health challenges* faced by refugee children and the financial obstacles encountered by their families. Prominently, the sub-theme of physical and psychological health unveiled significant concerns. These concerns were often rooted in the traumatic experiences and displacement faced by refugee children. Exposure to such hardships took a toll on their physical and mental health. Language and communication issues emerged as a critical factor affecting the overall well-being of these children. Difficulties in expressing themselves and seeking help worsened their psychological distress. Additionally, living conditions, characterized by overcrowded and substandard shelters, further contributed to health-related anxieties.

The sub-theme related to *financial challenges* illuminated the stark lack of financial resources available to refugee families. This limitation directly impeded their access to education and essential services. Syrian families, in particular, frequently faced the heavy financial burden of supporting their children's education. Beyond education, migrant families encountered economic hardships in fulfilling basic needs, such as ensuring adequate nutrition, securing suitable housing, and maintaining proper sanitation. These economic constraints had far-reaching implications, adversely affecting their overall well-being. Compounding these challenges, prejudiced attitudes held by some Turkish parents toward Syrian children and their families further worsened difficulties in accessing essential resources. These biases often created barriers to social integration and equitable access to services, perpetuating a cycle of adversity for refugee families. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers the holistic needs of these vulnerable populations, ranging from mental health support and language services to economic empowerment and social integration initiatives.

Recommendations and Insights

In this section, we examined the recommendations and insights derived from our thematic analysis, with the aim of enhancing the quality of preschool experiences for Syrian refugee children, their families, and educators. We identified three overarching themes, each accompanied by an array of sub-themes, to comprehensively present the suggestions emerging from the studies under review. Table 2 provides a list of the themes and sub-themes, along with an indication of whether they were addressed in the studies included in this review.

Enhancing Child Development

This theme delves into a range of strategies and programs designed to support the healthy development of children under temporary protection and to nurture the well-being and growth of these young minds. It is further divided into sub-themes that each offer a unique perspective on how this critical mission can be achieved. One pivotal facet we uncovered is the potential for *early intervention programs* tailored to the needs of these children. These programs can serve as invaluable tools for bolstering their development. Furthermore, our analysis advocates for the expansion of developmental screening, particularly in primary care settings. This proactive approach can help identify potential developmental delays or concerns caused by the challenges of forced displacement. By addressing these issues promptly, we can offer timely and targeted support, potentially mitigating the long-term effects of displacement and adversity and preventing them from becoming insurmountable obstacles to the child's development.

Equally important is the provision of *training for families*. Empowering parents and caregivers with the knowledge and tools to support their children's development at home can have a profound impact on the overall well-being of these families. In the context of Syrian refugee families with young children, these training programs can serve as a bridge between the home and the preschool educational environment. They offer parents valuable insights into their children's developmental needs and provide them with effective strategies to create a supportive and enriching home environment. By equipping parents with the skills and knowledge to engage in educational activities with their children, these programs not only reinforce the child's

cognitive and socio-emotional growth but also foster a sense of engagement within the family unit. Moreover, these training programs can address the unique challenges that Syrian families may face due to cultural differences, language barriers, and the stressors associated with forced displacement. They can provide culturally sensitive guidance on parenting and education, helping families navigate the complexities of raising children in a new cultural context. By actively involving parents in their children's development and education, these training programs strengthen the partnership between families and educators. This collaborative approach ensures that parents are well-prepared to play an active role in their children's learning journey, ultimately contributing to improved outcomes for Syrian refugee children in the preschool education system. Syrian refugee children often arrive with a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, which can sometimes lead to challenges in forming peer relationships within the Turkish preschool system.

The sub-theme of *social skills development* highlights the importance of addressing this aspect comprehensively. Preschool programs tailored to enhance social skills can have far-reaching benefits. These initiatives are designed to facilitate positive interactions and relationships with peers and teachers, helping children adapt to their new surroundings more effectively. By fostering essential social skills, such as cooperation, empathy, communication, and conflict resolution, these programs equip Syrian refugee children with the tools they need to thrive in a diverse and inclusive learning environment. Moreover, enhancing peer relations is not only crucial for the child's immediate well-being but also for their long-term integration into Turkish society. Positive interactions with Turkish peers can contribute to a sense of belonging and acceptance, mitigating feelings of isolation or exclusion that refugee children might experience.

Supporting Integration of Children and Families

This theme underscores the importance of fostering the integration of refugee children and their families into Turkish society and educational systems. This multifaceted theme encompasses various sub-themes that collectively offer a comprehensive strategy for achieving this crucial objective. Our analysis highlights the sub-theme of *social and cultural integration* as a critical aspect of facilitating the smooth transition of Syrian refugee children and their families into Turkish preschools. This sub-theme underscores the significance of fostering a sense of belonging, understanding, and cooperation among diverse communities. One strategy identified in our analysis is the organization of out-of-school activities that bring together Turkish and Syrian families. These activities provide valuable opportunities for cross-cultural interactions, promoting empathy, cultural exchange, and mutual respect. By participating in such initiatives, families from different backgrounds can develop a deeper understanding of each other's traditions, beliefs, and ways of life.

In addition to fostering relationships among adults, these activities also have a profound impact on children. Group activities designed to emphasize values like cooperation, friendship, responsibility, and helpfulness can create a sense of unity and shared purpose among Turkish and Syrian children. Educators play a pivotal role in facilitating these activities, ensuring that they take place in a safe and supportive environment where children can practice and refine their social skills. Moreover, these social and cultural integration initiatives serve as a bridge to close potential gaps between Syrian refugee children and their Turkish peers. By promoting an understanding of different cultures and backgrounds, these programs encourage tolerance, respect, and inclusivity among all students. In essence, they help cultivate a learning environment where diversity is celebrated, and differences are seen as strengths that enrich the educational experience.

A critical aspect of fostering successful inclusion for Syrian refugee children in Turkish preschools centers around effective *language integration*. Tailored individual education programs are key to addressing language barriers. These programs empower each child to express themselves confidently, ensuring equitable educational opportunities. Our analysis showed that dialogic book reading programs help bridge linguistic gaps in Syrian children's language proficiency. These programs utilize books that align with the children's language abilities, nurturing language skills while fostering a love for reading and learning. Another strategy offered in the literature is the use of interpreters. Employing interpreters as facilitators eases the adaptation of refugee children and their families to the school environment. Interpreters bridge linguistic gaps during

communication between teachers, students, and parents, ensuring accurate information exchange and enhancing transparency and inclusivity within the school community. Equipping Syrian parents with insights into the Turkish education system, along with offering Turkish language courses, enhances language proficiency and enables active participation in their children's education.

Curriculum and Educational Policies

This theme centers on crafting responsive curricula, educational policies, and teacher training to meet the unique needs of refugee children. It emphasizes the necessity of culturally inclusive curricular practices, policies that foster integration, and robust support mechanisms for educators. A cornerstone of facilitating the successful inclusion of Syrian refugee children in Turkish preschools is the development and implementation of culturally *responsive curricula*. Our analysis underscores the importance of preschool curricula incorporating linguistically and culturally responsive practices. By tailoring educational content and methodologies to align with the diverse backgrounds of children, curricula can effectively engage and support all learners. Prioritizing the development of competencies and school readiness skills through a play-based learning approach is central to this endeavor. This not only enhances academic growth but also nurtures socio-emotional well-being, providing a holistic foundation for each child's educational journey.

Educational policies wield significant influence in creating an inclusive and supportive environment for Syrian refugee children. Our findings highlight the pivotal role of policies that focus on developing center-based programs with curricula sensitive to the unique needs and characteristics of diverse groups of children. These policies serve as a bridge to facilitate the integration of refugee children into mainstream education systems, ultimately bolstering their resilience. By recognizing and addressing the distinctive challenges faced by this population through policy initiatives, educational systems can pave the way for more inclusive and equitable learning experiences.

Teachers are at the heart of any inclusive education system, and our analysis underscores the vital role they play in the successful inclusion of Syrian refugee children. *Comprehensive teacher preparation and professional development*, beginning with pre-service programs is essential to equip educators with the skills and insights required to effectively work with diverse student populations. These programs should focus on fostering cultural competence, resilience, and the ability to support the diverse forms of cultural capital that refugee children bring to the classroom. However, the journey does not end with pre-service training. Ongoing in-service support systems are equally crucial, as they enhance implementation fidelity and ensure that educators remain well-prepared to address the unique and evolving challenges faced by refugee children. Encouraging teachers to recognize and harness the potential within each child fosters a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, where every student can thrive and contribute positively to the educational community.

Discussion

Key Characteristics of Studies

The systematic review revealed several key characteristics of the studies under analysis. Notably, a concentration of research was observed in regions bordering Syria, such as Sanliurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis, Mardin, and Sirnak, which have experienced significant migration from Syria. While these provinces have been instrumental in addressing the educational needs of Syrian refugee children, it's essential to acknowledge potential regional biases. The experiences of Syrian children in other parts of Türkiye may differ significantly. Furthermore, the dominance of qualitative research designs was evident in the investigations. While qualitative research provides valuable insights into individuals' lived experiences, there is a noticeable scarcity of intervention studies within the research corpus. This limitation restricts the ability to draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of specific educational interventions for Syrian refugee children. Another noteworthy characteristic pertains to participant demographics. Nearly half of the studies included both Syrian and Turkish preschool children, highlighting the significance of understanding the interactions between these two groups. Such interactions play a pivotal role in the social integration and acceptance of Syrian children within

Turkish preschools.

Success Stories and Positive Outcomes

Reviewed studies have demonstrated the success of tailored strategies in preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. Interactive dialogic book reading programs have proven effective in enhancing language skills (Akca & Aslisen, 2022) while summer school programs have excelled in preparing children for formal education and fostering resilience (Erdemir, 2022c). Furthermore, social skills training programs have equipped refugee children with essential social competencies (Arabacioglu & Bagceli-Karaman, 2020). Additionally, parent training programs have empowered parents by providing insights into the Turkish education system (Erdemir, 2022a). Despite the notable successes achieved through these tailored strategies, it is important to note the shortage of intervention studies in this context. While current research underscores the effectiveness of diverse programs, a more comprehensive understanding of the most efficacious approaches is imperative.

Promoting social integration among Syrian refugee children and their families in Türkiye is of paramount importance. Reviewed studies have shed light on initiatives that foster positive relationships, peer culture, and community interactions, thereby mitigating the sense of isolation and displacement that refugee children may experience (Ozger & Kozandagi, 2021; Ustundag & Senol, 2023). These initiatives encompass activities such as engaging in play and outdoor experiences, which have been instrumental in creating opportunities for children to form friendships and establish meaningful relationships within the preschool environment, transcending cultural differences. Organizing out-of-school activities that bring Turkish and Syrian families together has also been instrumental in fostering cross-cultural interactions, understanding, and camaraderie among different communities (Dogrul & Akay, 2019). These initiatives break down cultural barriers and build bridges among populations with distinct backgrounds and experiences. The resulting sense of unity and shared purpose within the community highlights their potential in promoting social integration.

An essential aspect revealed by our analysis is the presence of diverse cultural capitals among refugee children. These forms of capital exemplify the multifaceted strengths, agency, and resilience of refugee children as they navigate their educational journeys and adjust to new lives in resettlement communities (Erdemir, 2022b). Recent research highlights how these various capitals mirror the children's unwavering commitment to social and racial justice, as they actively advocate against inequalities stemming from forced displacement, xenophobia, and social exclusion (Lowery & Romero-Johnson, 2023). This resilience is an intrinsic asset that contributes to the success of refugee children in Türkiye's preschool education system.

Challenges Experienced

The thematic analysis of the challenges encountered by Syrian refugee children, their families, and educators in the context of preschool education in Türkiye has revealed a complex and interconnected web of difficulties. These findings underscore the critical importance of addressing these challenges comprehensively and collaboratively. At its core, the challenges faced by Syrian refugee children in Türkiye's preschool education system are not isolated issues but are part of a larger ecosystem. Social integration and acceptance are fundamental for the success of these children, and the negative biases held by some Turkish parents create barriers that ripple through various aspects of their educational experience (Ozger & Akansel, 2019). These biases not only affect peer relations but also influence how popular children in the class interact with Syrian peers, highlighting the intricate dynamics at play.

Language and communication barriers represent a pervasive challenge that extends beyond the classroom. These barriers hinder effective interaction with teachers and peers and even affect play activities (Mercan-Uzun & Butun, 2016; Simsar, 2021). Furthermore, the cluster of developmental and health challenges underscores the multifaceted nature of obstacles to quality preschool education for refugee children (Ayas et al., 2022; Erdemir, 2021). These interconnected challenges emphasize the need for comprehensive reforms in the education system and policies to ensure equitable access to quality education.

Teacher training and support are pivotal in addressing the unique needs of refugee children. Teachers'

limited knowledge and language differences present significant hurdles that can only be overcome through comprehensive training and ongoing professional development. The interactions between teachers and Syrian refugee children are characterized by language and communication challenges as well as behavioral complexities (Aydin & Kurtulmus, 2018). These challenges highlight the importance of not only training teachers but also equipping them with strategies for managing diverse student behaviors, especially in culturally diverse classrooms. The complex cultural dynamics involving teachers, Turkish children, and refugee children underscore the need for cultural competence among educators and institutions. Countering negative attitudes and biases through cultural competence training is essential for creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment.

Finally, the well-being and access challenges faced by Syrian refugee children encompass physical and psychological health concerns, coupled with financial constraints (Mizikaci et al., 2021). These challenges have far-reaching implications, impacting not only the children's education but also their overall welfare. An inclusive approach is necessary to provide holistic support, including mental health services, language assistance, economic empowerment, and social integration initiatives. In sum, the challenges faced by Syrian refugee children in Türkiye's preschool education system are intricate and interconnected, spanning social, educational, cultural, and well-being dimensions. Addressing these challenges effectively requires a concerted effort involving educators, policymakers, and the broader community. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of these obstacles and working collaboratively, it is possible to create an educational environment that ensures the well-being, social integration, and academic success of all children, regardless of their background.

Recommendations and Insights

In the realm of enhancing child development for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, a multi-pronged approach is essential. Early intervention programs tailored to their specific needs have demonstrated considerable potential in promoting healthy development and mitigating the long-term effects of displacement and adversity (Erdemir, 2022b). Empowering parents and caregivers with training programs to support their children's development at home is equally critical. These programs bridge the home-preschool educational environment gap and provide parents with valuable insights into their children's developmental needs (Yalcin & Simsar, 2020). They offer culturally sensitive guidance, helping families navigate the complexities of raising children in a new cultural context.

In the domain of supporting the integration of refugee children and their families into Turkish society and educational systems, several strategies have proven instrumental. Prioritizing social and cultural integration facilitates the smooth transition of Syrian refugee children and their families into Turkish preschools (Ayas et al., 2022). Out-of-school activities that bring together Turkish and Syrian families foster relationships among adults and promote empathy, cultural exchange, and mutual respect. These activities also create a sense of unity and shared purpose among Turkish and Syrian children, encouraging tolerance, respect, and inclusivity among all students. Educators play a vital role in facilitating these activities within a safe and supportive environment, where children can practice and refine their social skills, thereby celebrating diversity within the learning environment.

Within the framework of curriculum and educational policies, responsive curricula and policies are paramount. Preschool curricula should incorporate linguistically and culturally responsive practices, aligning educational content and methodologies with diverse backgrounds to effectively engage and support all learners (Erdemir, 2022c). Prioritizing competency-based and school readiness skill development through a play-based approach provides a holistic foundation for each child's educational journey, as suggested by Erdemir (2022c).

Lastly, teacher training and professional development are central to the successful inclusion of Syrian refugee children (Erdemir, 2022b). Equipping educators with cultural competence, resilience, and the ability to harness diverse forms of capital that refugee children bring to the classroom is essential. Pre-service training is foundational, but in-service support systems are equally vital to ensure educators remain well-prepared to address the unique and evolving challenges faced by refugee children. These multifaceted approaches

collectively contribute to an enriched educational environment that fosters the holistic development and integration of Syrian refugee children in Türkiye.

Limitations, Implications and Conclusion

While this analysis provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within the context of preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may impact the generalizability of the findings. First, the included studies exhibited variations in terms of sample size, methodology, and rigor. This variability may introduce some degree of bias and affect the synthesis of findings. Second, there is a possibility of publication bias, where studies with positive or significant results are more likely to be published, potentially skewing the overall picture of preschool education for Syrian refugee children. Finally, although this review followed a systematic methodology for identifying relevant studies, there may be studies that would qualify for inclusion but were not identified due to the specific databases included in this review. Future research may benefit from expanding the database selection and incorporating additional sources to ensure a more comprehensive synthesis of the literature.

Building upon the insights gained from this analysis, several recommendations have emerged to address the challenges and enhance the quality of preschool education for Syrian refugee children, their families, and educators. First, educational policymakers should consider the findings of this analysis when crafting and implementing policies related to refugee education. Policies should be adapted and updated to better support the unique needs of Syrian refugee children, including language integration, cultural sensitivity, and teacher training. Second, educational institutions and authorities should prioritize the professional development of educators working with refugee children. This includes pre-service and in-service training programs focused on cultural competence, trauma-informed teaching, and inclusive practices. Ongoing support mechanisms should be established to help teachers address the evolving challenges faced by refugee children. Third, empowering parents through training programs that enhance their ability to support their children's development at home is crucial. These programs should address the specific challenges faced by Syrian families due to cultural differences, language barriers, and the stressors of forced displacement. Fourth, efforts to foster social and cultural integration should continue and expand. Organizing out-of-school activities that bring together refugee and host communities can create opportunities for cross-cultural interactions, promote empathy, and enhance mutual understanding.

In conclusion, this analysis sheds light on the multifaceted landscape of preschool education for Syrian refugee children in Türkiye. It reveals both the positive outcomes and the challenges encountered within this context. While there are evident success stories and effective strategies that enhance the educational experiences of refugee children, significant hurdles persist, particularly in the domains of social integration, language barriers, and teacher training. Despite these challenges, the recommendations outlined in this section provide a pathway for improving the quality of preschool education for Syrian refugee children and facilitating their successful integration into Turkish society. By addressing the limitations, embracing the insights, and implementing these recommendations, Türkiye can continue its efforts to provide an inclusive and supportive preschool education system that fosters the well-being and development of Syrian refugee children, while also promoting cultural understanding and integration within the broader community.

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