



**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
INSTITUTE FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**GENDER, DESKILLING, AND FORCED MIGRATION:
A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEE WOMEN IN TURKEY**

Master's Thesis

Aysima Çalışan

Master of Science in Applied Social Research

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THESIS APPROVAL



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As the self-proclaimed queen of procrastinators and perfectionists, writing this thesis has been extremely challenging and stressful for me. After completing the fieldwork and analyzing data, I set myself a goal of writing the *perfect thesis*, which made me constantly stressed about the quality of this study that had not yet been written. Even though I was initially advised to keep in mind that *perfect is the enemy of good*, I must admit that I also procrastinated in following this advice in the writing process. Fortunately, after long struggles and sleepless days and nights, I was finally able to finish my thesis. To say that I wrote this thesis by myself would be unfair to the efforts of many people who have kindly supported me in this process with their guidance, views, encouragement, and love. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to each of them.

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ÖZET

Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Vasıfsızlaştırma ve Zorunlu Göç: Türkiye'deki Mülteci Kadınların Deneyimlerine İlişkin Bir Çalışma

Uluslararası göç, barındırdığı belirli zorluklara rağmen, emek piyasalarının ihtiyaçlarına zamanında ve etkin bir şekilde cevap verebilecek işgücü havuzunu genişleterek ekonomik kalkınma için sayısız avantaj sağlamaktadır. Entegrasyon temelli perspektiften bakıldığında, yüksek eğitim ve vasıflara sahip mülteciler ve göçmenler, hem topluma hem de işgücü piyasasına kolayca entegre edilebilecek kişiler olarak gösterilmektedir. Bununla birlikte, pek çok yüksek vasıflı mültecinin genellikle becerilerinin ve niteliklerinin yeterince kullanılmadığı işlerde çalıştığı gözlemlenmiştir. Literatürde ev sahibi ülkenin göçmen ve mültecilerin eğitimlerini ve nitelikleri tanımaması sonucu ortaya çıkan bu durum vasıfsızlaştırma olarak kavramsallaştırılmaktadır.

Türkiye’de yaşayan 4 milyon mültecinin, 3,65 milyonunu geçici koruma altındaki Suriyeliler, 330.000’ini ise, çoğunluğu Afganistan, Irak ve İran’dan gelen uluslararası koruma altındakiler oluşturmaktadır. Geçici koruma altındaki Suriyeliler arasında kadınların oranının %46,2 olduğu işaret edilirken, uluslararası koruma altında olanların kadın-erkek oranına ilişkin veri sağlanmamaktadır. Türkiye örneğinde, birçok kadın mültecinin, kendi toplumlarının ataerkil ve kültürel normları sebebiyle, daha az oranla örgün eğitime dahil olduğu ve/veya ev dışında çalışmayı tecrübe ettiği; istihdam edilseler bile ücret eşitsizliği başta olmak üzere iş yerlerinde eşitsiz koşullara maruz kaldığı ortaya konulmuştur. Türkiye'deki daha az vasıflı ve daha az eğitilmiş kadın mültecilerin yanı sıra,

beşeri sermayesi yüksek olan mülteciler de bulunmaktadır. Bu kadın mülteciler, kendileri ile eşit eğitim ve niteliklere sahip olan erkek mültecilerden daha az para kazanmakta ve kendi beşeri sermayelerinin altındaki işlerde çalışmaktadır.

Göç alanındaki geniş literatüre rağmen, zorunlu göçün, toplumsal cinsiyet ve vasıflılık bağlantısallığını inceleyen çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu sebeple, bu tezde Suriye, Afganistan, İran ve Irak'tan gelen yüksek eğitilmiş mülteci kadınların deneyimlerine ve vasıfsızlaştırmaya karşı failliklerini nasıl kurguladıklarına odaklanılarak literatürdeki mevcut tartışmalara katkıda bulunmak amaçlanmıştır. Nitel bir yöntem benimsenerek kurgulanan bu çalışmada, 25-55 yaş aralığında en az lisans mezunu olan ve iş tecrübesine sahip olan 50 mülteci kadınla yüz yüze derinlemesine mülakat tekniğiyle görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Ayrıca, sivil toplum kuruluşları temsilcilerinin katıldığı iki odak grup çalışması yürütülmüştür. Görüşmeler Ankara, Bursa, İstanbul, Mersin ve Gaziantep illerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Elde edilen verilere dayanarak, vasıfsızlaşmaya yol açan engeller ve zorluklar, bu olgunun sonuçları ve vasıfsızlaşmanın etkileriyle mücadele etmede kadınların geliştirdikleri stratejiler analiz edilmiştir.

Çalışmadaki teorik tartışma, Zygmunt Bauman'ın yabancı kavramsallaştırması ve Pierre Bourdieu'nun oyun metaforuna dayandırılmıştır. Eğitim seviyeleri ve iş tecrübelerinden bağımsız olarak çok sayıda yüksek eğitilmiş mülteci kadının kendi becerilerinin çok altındaki işlerde çalışarak vasıfsızlaştırmaya maruz kaldıkları görülmüştür. Kurumsallaşmış kültürel sermayelerinin değersizleştirilmesinin, ev sahibi ülke ve meslek kuruluşlarının yanı sıra ataerkil yapının sistemli ve bilinçli olarak uyguladığı engeller ve zorluklar sonucu ortaya çıktığı saptanmıştır. Bu engel ve zorluklar; yasal kısıtlamalar, ağır bürokratik yükümlülükler, bilgi eksikliği, dil dezavantajı, yüksek eğitilmiş kadınlardan ziyade yüksek eğitilmiş erkeklere verilen öncelik ve kimlik temelli ayrımcılık olarak sıralanmıştır.

Vasıfsızlaştırmanın yol açtığı en önemli sonuç, kuşkusuz, yüksek vasıflı ve prestijli pozisyonlarla dolu olan işgücü piyasasının üst kesimlerinden mülteci kadınları dışlayan ve onları statü, ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel sermaye kayıplarına maruz bırakan beşeri sermaye ve emeğin değersizleştirilmesidir. Bunun yanı sıra, vasıfsızlaştırma, üniversiteye gitmelerini ve işgücüne katılmalarını engelleyen otoriter rejimlerin, uzun

sürekli çatışmaların ve savaşların, İslami terör örgütlerinin ve baskıcı ataerkil kültürün varlığına rağmen birbirleriyle ilişkili tüm tahakküm mekanizmalarını reddederek kamusal alanda var olma ve görünür olma mücadelesi veren bu kadınları özel alana tekrar hapsetmektedir. Ayrıca, yüksek eğitilmiş mülteci kadınlar hem sosyal uyum hem de ekonomik kalkınma için kilit aktörler olarak gösterilseler de, vasıfsızlaştırma onların hem kendi topluluklarına hem de ev sahibi ülkeye katkıda bulunma kapasitelerini engellemektedir. Ancak, Bourdieu'nun oyun alanındaki aktif aktörler olarak ortaya çıkan bu kadınların, sahip oldukları sermayeleri kullanarak daha iyi bir konum elde etmek, beşeri sermayelerini tekrar değerli hale getirmek ve kendilerini hedef ülkede yeniden konumlandırmak için bazı stratejiler geliştirdikleri görülmüştür. Bu stratejiler, bir sivil toplum kuruluşu kurmak ya da var olanlara dahil olmak, ulusötesi faaliyetlerde bulunmak, Türkiye'de eğitim almak, dini bir topluluğa dahil olmak, düzensiz göç başta olmak üzere üçüncü bir ülkeye göç etmek için yeni yollar aramak olarak saptanmıştır. Kendi kimliklerini ve habituslarını yeniden inşa edebilecekleri normal bir yaşam kurma arzularına ulaşmak yolunda edindikleri deneyimler ve geliştirdikleri stratejilerin ise milliyet, etnik köken, yaşadıkları şehir, yasal statü ve vatandaşlık kavramlarının kesişimselliğinden etkilendiği görülmüştür.

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplumsal cinsiyet; zorunlu göç; vasıfsızlaştırma; emek piyasası; kurumsallaşmış kültürel sermaye

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ABSTRACT

Gender, Deskillling, And Forced Migration: A Study Of The Experiences Of Refugee Women In Turkey

Despite its evident challenges, international migration brings countless advantages to both origin and destination countries' economic development by providing a diverse workforce and extending the available skill pool that can timely and efficiently respond to the labor market needs. From the integration-based perspective, refugees and migrants with higher formal skills and qualifications are usually regarded as those who can be easily integrated into the host society and the labor market. However, many skilled and highly skilled refugees often work in jobs for which their skills and qualifications are under-utilized. This issue is conceptualized as deskillling and occurs when their skills and qualifications are not recognized in the countries of destination. Deskillling is associated with brain waste and may hinder the full utilization of refugees' skills and integration processes.

There are almost 4 million registered refugees living in Turkey, including 3,65 million Syrian nationals under temporary protection, 46,2% of whom are women. Of the non-Syrian refugee population in Turkey, there are some 330 thousand international protection applicants, mostly coming from Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq, for whom no gender-based data is available. In Turkey's case, many refugee women received less formal education and/or never experienced working outside the home due to the patriarchal and cultural norms of their home country. In addition to less skilled refugee women in Turkey, there are also those with higher human capital, and even though they

are almost equally educated and qualified as their male counterparts, they still make less money. This gendered and skilled aspect of forced migration is yet to be studied at length.

Against this background, this thesis aimed to contribute to existing discussions in the literature on deskilling by providing lived experiences and viewpoints of skilled and educated refugee women coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. Adapting a qualitative method, 50 refugee women aged 25 to 55 having at least a bachelor's degree and work experience were interviewed face-to-face, and two focus group interviews were conducted with NGO representatives. The interviews took place in Ankara, Bursa, Istanbul, Mersin, and Gaziantep. Based on the data gathered, barriers and challenges leading to deskilling, repercussions of the phenomenon, and the women's strategies to combat the impacts of deskilling were analyzed.

Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualization of stranger and Pierre Bourdieu's metaphor of game were utilized as an entry point for the theoretical discussion. Regardless of their skills, prior work experience, and higher education level, it was detected that many highly skilled refugee women suffer from deskilling, which causes them often work in jobs they are overqualified for. Accordingly, it was discussed that the devaluation of their institutionalized cultural capital is conducted through the barriers and challenges that the host country and professional associations, as well as the patriarchal structure, have employed systematically and deliberately. Those barriers were illustrated as legal restrictions, heavy bureaucratic requirements, lack of knowledge, language barrier, priority given to highly educated men rather than highly educated women, and identity-based discrimination.

The most important repercussion of deskilling was not surprisingly marked as the devaluation of their human capital and labor, which excludes them from the upper segments of the labor market with highly skilled and prestigious positions and makes them suffer occupational downward mobility and loss of economic, social, and cultural capital. Moreover, deskilling also confined these women back to the private sphere who had struggled to exist and be visible in their home country by rejecting all interrelated mechanisms of gender-based exclusion and male domination on them due to the existence of authoritarian regimes, long-lasting conflicts and wars, Islamic terrorist organizations, and oppressive patriarchal culture that prevent them from going to university and joining

the workforce. Furthermore, even though highly-skilled refugee women are pointed out as key agents for both social cohesion and economic development, it was understood that deskilling hinders their enormous capacity to transform both their ethnic communities and host countries for the better. However, these women are active agents in the game field of Bourdieu, who are able to mobilize the capital that they possess in order to carve out a better position, redeem their human capital, and reposition themselves in the country of destination. They have developed some strategies which were identified as establishing and volunteering for certain civil society organizations, engaging in transnational activities, pursuing further education in Turkey and/or acquiring Turkish language, involving in a religious community, seeking a new way out, such as becoming part of irregular migration flows to move to a third country. To reach their desire to establish a normal life in which they can reconstruct their identity and habitus, this thesis highlights that their experiences and strategies were complicated at the intersection of nationality, ethnicity, city of residence, legal status, and citizenship in the neo-liberal order.

Key Words: Gender, deskilling; forced migration; labor market; institutionalized cultural capital

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASAM : Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants.....	36
CoHE: Council of Higher Education of Turkey	52
DGMM : Directorate General of Migration Management.....	14
ECRE : European Council on Refugees and Exiles	22
GDP: Gross Domestic Product	36
HEI : Higher Education Institution.....	52
ILO: International Labor Organization.....	4
IOM : International Organization for Migration.....	1
LFIP : Law on Foreigners and International Protection	14
NGO : Non-Governmental Organization.....	40
OECD : Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development	3
PMM : Presidency of Migration Management	5
SDI : Socioeconomic Development Index.....	37
SuTP : Syrian Nationals under Temporary Protection	5
TRY : Turkish New Lira.....	37
TurkStat : Turkish Statistical Institute	36
UNHCR : United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	36

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1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section introduces and summarizes key concepts of the study, then defines the research problem against the background. The second section, however, states the research aim, questions, and importance and focuses on how the research differs from the existing discussions in the migration literature.

1.1. BACKGROUND AND THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In today's world, migration is a significant and pressing phenomenon that ought to be carefully examined. Its multi-faceted and transnational character demands global, national, and local governance of migration and defines the responsibilities of the society and the state in this regard. Current migration figures estimate around 281 million international migrants (IOM, 2022, p. 3), which certainly constitutes a strong reference point in understanding the cruciality and urgency of the issue. These figures are closely affected by both acute events and long-term trends; thus, the unpredictability of events makes it difficult to estimate what would change these statistics in the near and far future. For instance, up until a year ago, it was difficult to envision over 7 million people seeking refuge in Europe due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine (UNHCR, 2022a). Similarly, it would be difficult to predict a humanitarian crisis such as the civil war in Syria in 2011, the large exodus of Rohingya people from Myanmar in 2017, and the subsequently forced migration flows from Ethiopia at the time. Unfortunately, when there is forced displacement, it may be a long-term trend making return impossible. A protracted case that comes to mind would be Palestinian refugees who have been displaced for more than

70 years. It is challenging to forecast how the figures would evolve over time if and when present regional tensions are taken into account.

Migration management is a difficult task. There is a need to consider host societies and local populations as well as migrants and address concerns pertaining to security, social integration, ghettoization, and the economic burden that it brings. Bearing in mind different scenarios to which should be responded by a comprehensive approach where migration management and integration are prioritized, ensuring fair migration for all, and promoting intercultural dialogue would offer countless opportunities to not only newcomers but also locals, countries of origin, transit, and destination. Therefore, international cooperation is needed now more than ever to strengthen migration management, combating xenophobia, racism, and discrimination as anti-immigrant rhetoric and vote-share of far-right parties have gained momentum over the last years (New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, 2016; Davis & Deole, 2017, pp. 13-15). It is vital to establish such international cooperation that supports host societies while promoting the means for the social cohesion of migrants and refugees into economic markets as well as the harmonization of different cultures and communities.

However, it is also important to keep in mind that establishing such international cooperation requires providing both theoretical and practical solid knowledge derived from the field. Over the years, scholars, policymakers, and even migrants themselves have shared and continue to share the knowledge they have gained in field studies. These practical and daily experiences first lead to theoretical discussions among policy and academic circles and then form the basis of the development of theoretical perspectives on migration. The most prominent of these discussions is undoubtedly those carried out on ensuring immigrant and refugee integration, which still lacks a “*generally accepted definition, theory, and model*” (Castles, et al., 2002, p. 112). While some support the idea of migrants and refugees fully embracing and adapting the culture and values of host societies by abandoning their own; others, having a hierarchically superior receiving society perspective, accents the importance of sharing responsibility between migrant and refugee groups and host societies although they tend to ignore migrants’ agency (Borselli & van Meijl, 2020, p. 581; Da Lomba, 2010, p. 418; Hammond, 2013, p. 1003; Strang & Ager, 2010, pp. 592-593). The last view, on the contrary, highlights agency in the dynamic and two-way, long-term, and multi-dimensional process of integration between

all the parties in question (ECRE, 2002, p. 4; Hammond, 2013, p. 1003; Spencer & Charsley, 2016, p. 7; van Heelsum, 2017, p. 2138).

Although these discussions have been carried out under different terminologies, the one point they have in common is the undoubtedly positive contribution of labor market integration as the greatest facilitator to this process. To support this argument, it has been shown that refugees and migrants incline to have higher participation rates in the labor force, make significant net contributions to tax revenue, and increase incomes and employment opportunities for both countries of origin and destination by supplying a diverse workforce, extending the available skill pool that can respond to the labor market needs timely and effectively and operating their transnational ties which can stimulate trade, investment, and remittances (Foged & Peri, 2016, pp. 3-4; OECD, 2010, pp. 17-18; OECD, 2012, p. 125; OECD - ILO, 2018, pp. 15-16; OECD, 2021, pp. 112-114; World Bank Group, 2016). However, the challenges migrants and refugees face as a result of social stigmatization, xenophobia, discriminatory practices, and policies hinder the full utilization of their contribution by preventing their integration into the labor market and society.

One particular challenge in this regard has been detected and pointed out by migration scholars as deskilling, which occurs in the circumstances where skilled and highly-skilled migrants and refugees end up working in jobs for which their skills and qualifications are under-utilized (Bauder, 2003; Creese & Wiebe, 2009; Man, 2004; Siar, 2013). Deskilling is associated with the non-recognition of foreign credentials, professional experience, cultural know-how, and language proficiency in the host countries, even though the studies have shown that refugees and migrants with higher human capital are the ones easily integrated into the society (Andersson, 2021; Huber et al., 2010; Krahn et al., 2000; Scheibelhofer & Täubig, 2019; Sommer, 2021; Sparreboom & Tarvid, 2017).

The reasons leading to deskilling have been explained by the presence of the gendered, racialized, and discriminated neoliberal institutional practices, which devalue educational and professional experience, and negatively affect recruitment processes, occupations held, and wages earned (Boyd & Thomas, 2002; Elo, Aman, & Taube, 2020; Man, 2004). Racialized and discriminated nature of deskilling simply put forth that

migrants and refugees are less likely to participate in labor markets and to be employed in high-prestigious occupations compared to the domestically educated ones (Boyd & Thomas, 2002; Krahn et al., 2000). The gendered dimension of it, on the other hand, shows that highly skilled migrant and refugee women are more likely than their male counterparts to be employed in insecure, low-status, and part-time jobs where they also suffer from gender-based discrimination or to become unemployed (Creese & Wiebe, 2009; Kofman, 2012; Mojab, 2000; Sert, 2016; Sparreboom & Tarvid, 2017). The gendered neoliberal labor markets prioritizing flexible and cheap labor consider migrant and refugee women as the source of disposable labor and make them engage more in informal jobs than men (Man, 2004; Standing, 2011). Moreover, in the absence of state-subsidized social programs that support women, highly-skilled migrant and refugee women are not able to participate in courses to prove their skills or fulfill the requirements for the skill recognition process or engage in full-time jobs as they are expected to perform their gendered duties at home (Man, 2004).

Deskilling causes negative financial, psychological, and health consequences for migrants and refugees; however, these seem to disproportionately affect women more than men due to the intersectionality of identities such as being a woman, migrant, and refugee. Deskilling also has negative repercussions for both countries of origin and destination as the capacities and human capital they have are not fully utilized (Siar, 2013). The need for diminishing and eliminating these consequences of deskilling has been highly pointed out within the scope of migration management through facilitating or breaking new paths for skill recognition by international declarations and labor standards. Accordingly, two global compacts on the international declaration of migration highlight its importance while calling the international community for *"recognition of skills and qualifications among refugees and migrants in host communities"* (Global Compact for Migration, 2018; Global Compact on Refugees, 2018). These compacts also emphasize the importance of utilization and development of the capacities and skills of women and young refugees in particular. Similarly, International Labor Organization's (ILO) labor standards underscore the significance of special provisions aiming at ensuring recognition and certification of skills and qualifications, *"including prior learning and previous experience, irrespective of the countries where they were acquired and whether acquired formally or informally"* (ILO, 2004; 2017).

1.2. THE RESEARCH AIM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

As of June 2022, there are 27,1 million refugees around the globe, excluding the number of Ukrainians and 4,6 million asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2022b). Among over 4 million refugees and asylum-seekers reported in Turkey, there are 3,65 million Syrian nationals under temporary protection (SuTP), while some 330 thousand international protection applicants, mostly coming from Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq, up until August 2022 (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022a; UNHCR, 2021, p.1). Data regarding the gender dimension for those under international protection has not been published yet; however, according to the latest data (see Table 1.1 below), it is stated that Syrian women comprise over 46,2% of all SuTPs, which also predicts that the number of male refugees is slightly higher than that of women (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022a).

Table 1.1: Distribution by Age and Gender of Registered Syrian Refugees Recorded by Taking Biometric Data

Age	Male	Female	Total
0-4	272.713	254.432	527.145
5-9	284.771	267.798	552.569
10-14	220.814	207.593	428.407
15-18	137.219	117.633	254.852
19-24	265.533	198.926	464.459
25-29	223.791	159.801	383.592
30-34	160.216	117.904	278.120
35-39	124.870	96.135	221.005
40-44	84.752	71.741	156.493
45-49	58.616	57.112	115.728
50-54	44.164	43.321	87.485
55-59	34.777	35.066	69.843
60-64	22.479	23.489	45.968
65-69	14.642	15.858	30.500
70-74	8892	9842	18.734
75-79	4252	5193	9445
80-84	2282	3114	5396
85-89	1082	1582	2664
90+	745	1107	1852
Total	1.966.610	1.687.647	3.654.257

Source: Presidency of Migration Management (PMM), 2022a

As summarized in the previous section, a wide range of research on refugees' integration processes and their contribution to national development usually depicts general economic patterns while addressing refugees' economic integration as a whole group and gives out very little information about the production of uneven economic

integration. More focused literature which takes up gender relations and women's participation in paid labor in Turkey usually portrays labor market experiences of mostly less educated and low-skilled migrant and refugee women living in Turkey rather than that of highly skilled ones (Aygül & Kaba, 2019; Dedeoğlu, 2011; Öztürk, Serin, & Altınoğlu, 2019; Uçar, 2020; Ünlütürk Ulutaş & Akbaş, 2018). These women are stated to receive less formal education and/or never experience working outside the home due to their home country's patriarchal and cultural norms. Yet, even if they choose to find employment in income-generating activity, they are paid nearly 20 percent less on average than their male counterparts and almost 25 percent less than the minimum wage (ILO, 2019). These ethnographic studies also reveal the patriarchal and capitalist relations that are embedded in policies and regulations of the host society, shaping women's mobility, negative experiences, and various social exclusion practices they have encountered in the public sphere while mentioning the transformation of family relations and uneven gender hierarchies in the private sphere (Dedeoğlu, 2011; Öztürk, Serin, & Altınoğlu, 2019; Uçar, 2020; Ünlütürk Ulutaş & Akbaş, 2018).

Other than the less skilled and less educated female refugees in Turkey, there are also those with higher human capital albeit their numbers are much smaller. In other words, there are those who have gotten at least a bachelor's degree in their own country and have work experience, even though it is hard to estimate their exact number. Despite overwhelming literature on Syrians in Turkey and elsewhere due to the protracted nature of Syrian displacement, this gendered and skilled aspect of forced migration is yet to be studied at length. Other than skilled Syrians under temporary protection, those under international protection are almost invisible not only in statistics but also in qualitative research. Anecdotal evidence and participant observation suggest that regardless of their skills, prior work experience, and higher education level, many highly-skilled refugee women often work in jobs they are overqualified for. It points out that these refugee women are being stripped of their skills or de-skilled in Turkey. This deskilling is complicated in the absence of professional accreditation mechanisms and support systems by the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, class, and nationality in the immigrant-marginalizing atmosphere of the new neo-liberal world order (Man, 2004, p. 137).

Against this background, this thesis aims at contributing to discussions on deskilling by providing lived experiences and viewpoints of skilled and educated female

refugees who have been documented to be disproportionately affected by deskilling. Centering their agency at the heart of the debate, the aspirations, human capital, and viewpoints of highly-educated refugee women are prioritized. Adapting a qualitative method, face-to-face, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews were conducted with refugee women living in Turkey coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. Based on the data gathered, the following research questions are aimed to be answered:

- What are the factors leading to deskilling, and how do highly skilled refugee women experience it?
- What kind of patriarchal and neo-liberal social structures lead to deskilling and downward mobility among them?
- What are the impacts of deskilling on women's economic and social integration?
- How do gender, labor, legal status, and deskilling relate to and intersect while determining the extent to which each woman is exposed to these effects?
- What strategies have these women developed against the repercussions of deskilling in order to regain their previous achievements in their homeland and better construct and reconstruct their identities and class positions by preserving their habitus and capital?

In the absence of a comprehensive approach to data collection and research on refugees' skills, not only Turkey but many countries around the world are searching for policies and strategies to enhance the development and utilization of refugees' skills and job opportunities. Skill transfer or using the skills of refugees/migrants for the advantage of the host society is beneficial not only for refugees/migrants themselves but also for the receiving countries. However, there are still significant challenges to applying recognized and transferrable skills into policy and practice due to inconsistency of qualitative and quantitative components and incomplete, unreliable, or inaccurate data that are insufficient for policymaking. This thesis also aims to produce reliable and up-to-date data depicting refugee women's unique local experiences who suffer from the consequences of deskilling both in the private and public spheres. Obtaining such data is expected to serve the national interests of Turkey when devising comprehensive migration policies. At an international level, it is expected to achieve Goal 5 on gender

equality and Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, set under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Therefore, it might be beneficial for governmental, non-governmental, and international bodies alike.



2. CHAPTER 2: MIGRATION INTO TURKEY: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Migration has always been one of the defining issues shaping Turkey's economic, political, social, and cultural structure owing to the fact that the country's unique geographical location hosted various ethnic and religious groups for centuries and the migration legacy inherited by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Research aiming at classifying Turkey's international migration history clusters the patterns under different periods, while this section briefly examines it under five key periods (Akcapar & Çalışan, *forthcoming*):

- The first period covering the years between 1923-1950, where the prominent migration movement was the population exchange
- The second period covering the years 1950-1980, when internal migration movements and labor migration abroad were dominant
- The third period between 1980-2000, when citizens of neighboring countries sought asylum and the labor migration to Turkey began
- The fourth period between 2000 and 2011, when irregular migration movements and mixed migration movements were detected
- The fifth period covering the years 2011-2022, in which Turkey started to host the highest number of refugee groups in its history, along with those coming through mixed migration flows

The focus of this study is forced migration flows toward Turkey. Therefore, this section briefly discusses the first and second periods of Turkish international migration history while much weight is given to other periods.

2.1. THE FIRST (1923-1950) AND SECOND (1950-1980) PERIODS

During the modernization and the nation-state building processes of the newly-established Republic, state-led emigration of non-Muslim population and immigration of Turkish descent Muslims were considered an influential political tool in order to homogenize Turkey's populations based on Turkic and Muslim identity (Bayındır Goularas & Sunata, 2015, p. 17; İçduygu & Aksel, 2013, pp. 169-170). The most prominent development of the first period covering the years 1923-1950, is pointed out as the exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (İçduygu & Aksel, 2013, p. 170). The migration movements encountered in this period revealed the need for legal regulation on this issue. Immediately afterward, the Law on Settlement of 1934, numbered 2510, came into force, intending to use resettlement policies as an assimilation tool targeting non-Turkish and non-Muslim populations (İçduygu, Toktas, & Soner, 2008, p. 336).

The second period of Turkey's international migration history was mainly characterized by labor migration toward the Western European countries, including Germany, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, with whom Turkey signed bilateral labor force agreements. In order to facilitate the migration of Turkish workers to these countries, the 1950 Passport Law and the Constitution of 1961 came into force by granting Turkish nationals the freedom to go abroad as a reflection of efforts aiming to boost economic development with remittances and acquiring know-how and to reduce high unemployment (Abadan-Unat, 2011, p. 80). Even though these labor agreements were executed on the basis of a temporary rotation, it was seen that those migrating to these countries as *guest workers* had no intention of going back as they then brought their families with them and settled in these host countries (Abadan-Unat, 2015, p. 261; Erdoğan, Devlet Karapınar, & Aydın, 2013, pp. 443-444).

After the cessation of immigration into Europe due to the oil crisis in the 1970s, Turkish nationals also directed their migration routes to Australia for settlement and to

the Middle East and North African countries, including Libya, Qatar, and Jordan, with the purpose of employment (Toksöz, Erdoğan, & Kaşka, 2012, p. 43). The other main development regarding the second period is highlighted as the fact that Turkey has signed first the 1951 Geneva Convention in 1961 and then its 1967 United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1968 under time reservation – which was abolished in 1968 – and geographical reservation which is still up to date. Turkey has become a party to the international migration regime since then, through these conventions.

2.2.THE THIRD PERIOD (1980-2000)

The third period has witnessed diverse migratory movements, which symbolizes the first reflections of mixed migration flows in which those considered foreigners – non-Turkish and non-Muslim ones – have sought refuge in Turkey inasmuch as regional events have taken place in the neighboring countries, namely Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf crisis, and expulsion of Turks from Bulgaria (see Table 2.3) (Akcapar & Çalışan, *forthcoming*; İçduygu, 2014, pp. 92-93; Kirişçi, 2007, p. 93). These asylum seekers consisted of those who were forcibly displaced due to war, conflict, and political unrest. Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, however, new economically motivated migrant flows who suffer political and economic instability in their newly independent country of origin have fronted toward Turkey since the late 1980s.

Migration policies that were thus far based on the *muhajir-guest worker (muhacir-gurbetçi)* dualism and came into effect within the framework of the nation-state building process have begun to be shaken by the influx of those newcomers who were considered *foreigners* rather than *migrants or refugees* in this period (Dedeoğlu, 2011, p. 31; İçduygu, Erder, & Gençkaya, 2014, p. 222; Toksöz, Erdoğan, & Kaşka, 2012, p. 18). Therefore, some foreigners were provided *guest or temporary asylum status*, some were either repatriated or resettled to a third country, while the others continued to stay in Turkey even though they lacked proper document and their asylum applications were rejected (Avcı & Kirişçi, 2006, p. 151). Whether economically or politically motivated, most of those preferred to go to the West through Turkey, while some chose to stay. Therefore, the main development of this period is the prominence of Turkey's transit country profile (Bayındır Goularas & Sunata, 2015, p. 20; Dedeoğlu, 2011, p. 33).

The fact that Turkey attracted attention among immigrants as a transit country corresponds to the growth in the number of irregular entries into the country, which alarmed Turkish authorities, who considered these movements as potentially posing a threat to national security and laws due to the presence of Islamic and separatist terror organizations operating particularly in the eastern part of the country (Avcı & Kirişçi, 2006, p. 154; Kirişçi, 1996, p. 300). Against these events, Turkey has introduced the 1994 Asylum Regulation as a temporary protection mechanism (Soykan, 2012, p. 39). This Regulation aimed to plot a road map on the procedures to be followed when creating a safe shelter controlled by firm security measures to prevent the irregular entry of many foreigners into Turkey (Kirişçi, 1996, pp. 299-301). Various national and international parties have criticized the regulation as it tended to violate the principle of *non-refoulement* due to a rigid five-day time limit for filing international protection applications, which led to a sharp increase in deportations (İçduygu & Aksel, 2012, p. 40; Avcı & Kirişçi, 2006, p. 154).

When particularly focused on this study's concern groups, as seen above, the more recent international mobility of Iranians, Iraqis, and Afghans to or through Turkey dates back to the third period. For instance, Turkey first faced a massive influx of refugees from Iran. After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, approximately 1 million Iranians, including opponents and religious minorities, had to flee Iran and seek refuge in Turkey, which was considered a transit country on the way to their final destinations (Akcapar, 2010, pp. 163-164). Iranian migration has continued to be reported while its nature has changed from more political and less economical to less political and more economical (Akcapar, 2010, p. 164).

Following the migration of the Iranian refugees, Afghan asylum-seekers who fled their countries due to the Soviet invasion came and sought refuge in Turkey. Immigration from Afghanistan, which started with the asylum of 4350 Afghans in 1982, has continued with the escalation of political and economic instability in the country over the years, and Afghans have become the first among both irregular migrants and those under international protection (see Table 2.3) (Avşar & Tunçalp, 1995, p. 42). Regarding the migration of Iraqis to Turkey, on the other hand, one would easily recall the Iraqi migration after the 1988 Halabja massacre in Northern Iraq and the Gulf Crisis in 1991.

As a result of these regional events, over 1 million Iraqis received temporary protection from the Turkish authorities (Erdoğan & Kaya, 2015, p. 12).

2.3. THE FOURTH PERIOD (2000-2011)

Parallel to the trend defined as the globalization of migration (Castles & Miller, 2008), as of the 2000s, Turkey has been hosting an increasing number of immigrants coming from diverse economic, social, and cultural backgrounds and having various migration drivers and aspirations thanks to the country's continued economic growth, employment opportunities, pleasant climate as well as migrants themselves' search for a better way of life. This new migration pattern has led to the emergence of mixed migrant groups consisting of asylum seekers, refugees, labor migrants, irregular migrants, transit migrants, professionals, and international students, as well as those involving lifestyle and circular migration, which has highlighted the country's position as a destination one (Akcapar, 2017, pp. 3-5; Dedeoğlu, 2011, p. 31; İçduygu, Erder, & Gençkaya, 2014, p. 223).

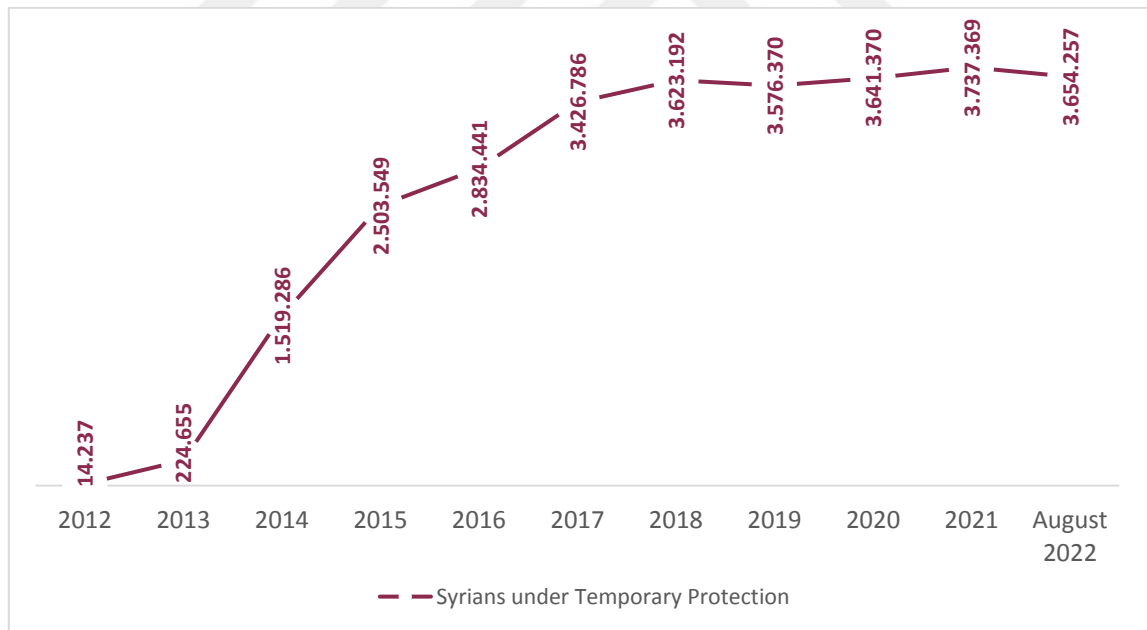
The other prominent feature of this period is that Turkey has made numerous reforms targeting its migration regime as an indicator of the steps taken toward becoming a member state of the European Union (Bayındır Goularas & Sunata, 2015, p. 21; Karapınar, 2017, p. 104). Turkey has been asked to take measures aiming to (1) prevent irregular immigration by adopting and implementing EU legislation, and practices on admission, readmission, and deportation, (2) strengthen border management, (3) remove the geographical clause for the 1951 Geneva Convention, (4) to regulate asylum procedures and (5) to provide shelter and social support for asylum seekers and refugees (Accession Partnership Documents, 2001; 2003; 2006; 2008).

To this end, one of the most remarkable steps taken by the Turkish authorities was the enactment of The Law on Work Permits of Foreigners in 2003 as the first regulation that allows foreigners to seek a job and work in the country (Toksöz, Erdoğan, & Kaşka, 2012, p. 24). The primary motivation behind the passage of this law was to address the increasing number of irregular and circular labor migrants economically drawn to Turkey from periphery regions, including Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, and South Asia (Akcapar, 2017, p. 4).

2.4.THE FIFTH PERIOD (2011-TODAY)

The fifth period of Turkish migration history has been predominantly marked by the arrival of Syrians in Turkey in 2011, whose number has increased due to the escalation of the civil war in Syria as well as Turkey's open-border policy and humanitarian efforts paving their way out. The number of Syrian asylum-seekers registered as 14.237 in 2012 was reported to be increased to 3.654.257 as of August 2022 (see Figure 2.1). This unprecedented migration flow needed to be well governed has had demographic, political, economic, and socio-cultural repercussions (Akcapar, 2017, p. 3). Admitting that Turkey has become a country of immigration, Turkish authorities, therefore, enacted Law on Foreigners and International Protection numbered 6458 (LFIP) in 2013, which also required the establishment Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), whose name has been changed to "T.R. Presidency of Migration Management of the Ministry of Interior" in 2021 (Akcapar, 2017, p. 4).

Figure 2.1: Syrians Under Temporary Protection by Years



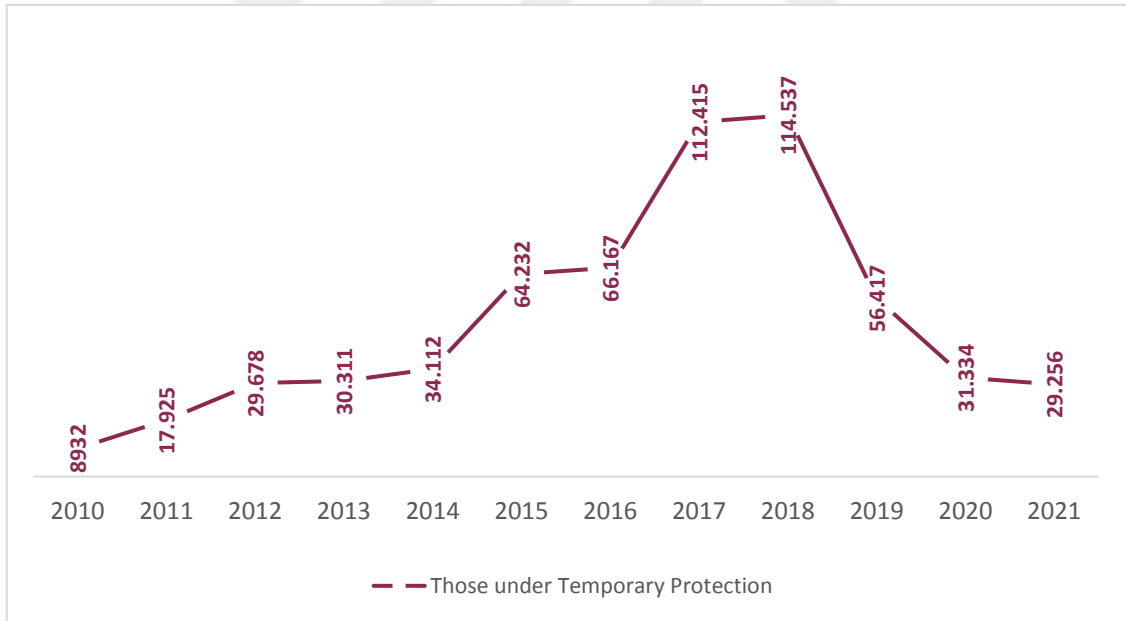
Source: Presidency of Migration Management, 2022b.

Having such regulation is considered an important solid step demonstrating that immigration has begun to be considered from a different perspective for Turkey, which, from the first years of the Republic, had never had a holistic and systematic policy (Erder, 2007, p. 5; Erdoğan & Kaya, 2015, p. 14). The other reason making the LFIP distinctly

important is the fact that it has considered the legal status of Syrians as *those under temporary protection* rather than the *guests* and has enabled them to have access to their fundamental rights, including healthcare and education, obtaining an identity card, and being protected from forced repatriation (Akcapar, 2017, p. 6; Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği, 2014).

In addition, the LFIP has regulated the international protection system in which the right to benefit from health services for one year and access to social assistance have been introduced for those seeking asylum and conditional refugees who are not Syrians. Since 2011, almost 600.000 people have applied for international protection (see Figure 2.2) (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022b). According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 330.000 asylum seekers are currently recorded, mostly coming from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran (UNHCR, 2022c).

Figure 2.2: Those Under International Protection by Years (2010-2021)



Source: Presidency of Migration Management, 2022b.

The other main development characterizing the fifth period is the amendment to Turkish citizenship law numbered 9601 in 2016, through which exceptional citizenship acquisition was introduced for (1) those investing or having a certain amount of capital, (2) those legally staying in the country and (3) those who have already made contributions to Turkish society or have the capacity to do so (Akcapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 180). In this

context, however, the citizenship process for Syrians is operated as follows (Akcapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 180): Those who are considered eligible candidates by the government are invited to individual interviews. Their files are assessed and analyzed based on certain criteria, including 1) whether they enter the country legally, 2) holding a temporary protection status or residence permit, 3) having at least an undergraduate degree, 4) possessing a profession, and 5) not having committed any crimes. As of August 2022, it has been announced that 211.908 Syrians have been granted Turkish citizenship, of whom 120.133 of these people are adults and 91.755 children (Mülteciler Derneği, 2022).

The other important elements reflecting the complex nature of mixed migration movements observed in the fifth period are regular and irregular migrants. According to the rights introduced by the LFIP, regular migrants can obtain residence permits on the grounds of certain categories – namely, education, employment, and family reunification (see Table 2.1). Those under international protection status, consisting mostly of Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians, and Syrians, are issued residence permits specific to their status. As of 2022, over 1,3 million residence permits were issued for foreigners heavily concentrated in major metropolitan cities, such as Istanbul, Antalya, and Ankara (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022c).

Table 2.1: Distribution of Residence Permits

Residency Types	Total Number	Nationality of Foreigners Holding Residence Permit	Number
Short Term	1.001.810	Iraq	133.958
		Turkmenistan	97.249
		Syria	90.646
		Russia	87.844
		Iran	82.423
Student Term	126.430	Azerbaijan	16.448
		Iran	10.975
		Turkmenistan	8.306
		Iraq	7.799
		Somali	7.352
Family Term	97.068	Azerbaijan	12.693
		Uzbekistan	6.991
		Russia	8.038
		Ukraine	6.778
		Morocco	6.201

Source: Presidency of Migration Management, 2022c.

There are also those who stay in Turkey with work permits as they are exempt from the requirement to obtain a residence permit. Based on the data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the number of work permit holders in 2020 is 123.574, 66,2% of whom are men and 33,8% are women (T.C. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, 2020). Accordingly, the nationality with the highest number of work permits is detected as Syrians, with 62.369 people who are followed by nationals of Turkmenistan (9.721), Georgia (4.873), Uzbekistan (4.383), and Iran (4.015). While the number of Afghan nationals with a work permit is 1.921, that of Iraqis is 1.794. The proportion of women among Syrian, Afghan, and Iraqi work permit holders is quite low. For example, only 6,4% of the total number of Syrian work permit holders are women. Among Iranians, although women are less in number than men, there is no big difference detected between Iranian men (2.178) and Iranian women (1.837) (see Table 2.2).

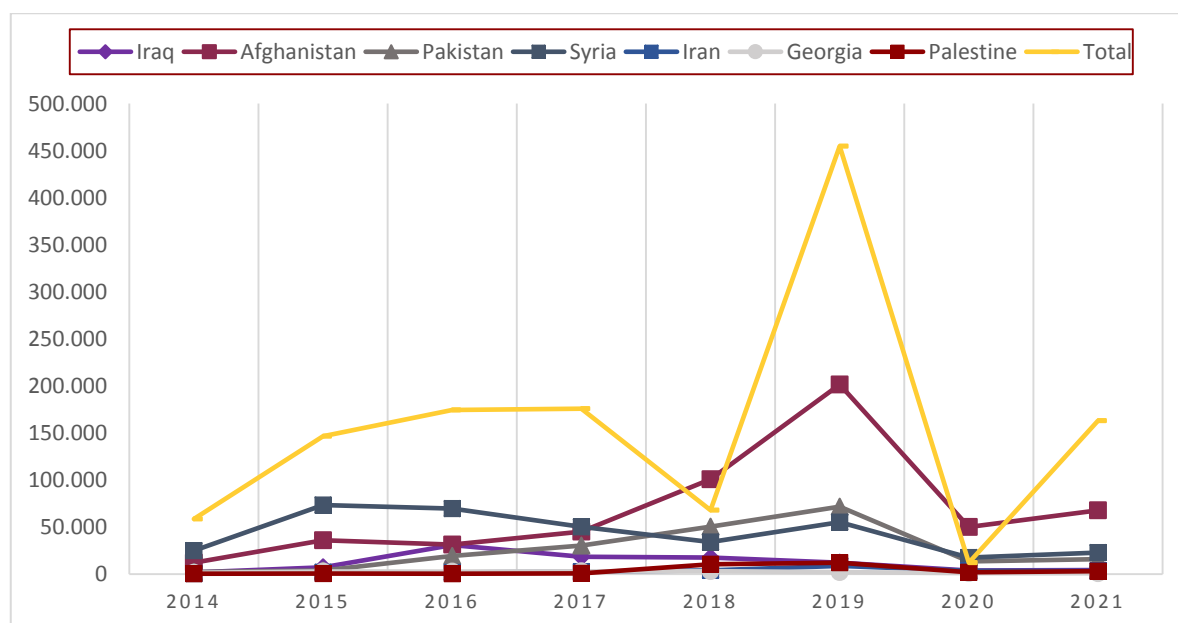
Table 2.2: Distribution of Work Permits

Nationality of Foreigners Holding Work Permit	Number	Gender	
		Male	Female
Syria	62.369	58.402	3.967
Turkmenistan	9.721	1.370	8.351
Georgia	4.873	235	4.638
Uzbekistan	4.383	562	3.821
Iran	4.015	2.178	1.837
Afghanistan	1.921	1.561	260
Iraq	1.794	1.521	273

Source: T.C. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, 2020.

On the other hand, the high number of irregular migrants reported in Turkey is another characteristic of this period. The Presidency of Migration Management reports that the number of irregular migrants apprehended over the last ten years reached over 1.680.421 (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022d). As seen in Figure 2.3, the year 2019, in which more than 454 thousand people, almost half of whom were Afghan nationals, were apprehended, stands out as the peak point in the irregular migration history of Turkey. The distribution of the irregular migrants apprehended between the years 2014 and 2021 based on their nationality is shown in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3: Distribution of Irregular Migrants Based on Nationality by Year (2014-2021)



Source: Presidency of Migration Management, 2022d.

Table 2.3: Summary Table Regarding Some Remarkable Migration Movements Since 1979

Year(s)	Source Country	Prominent Reasons for Migration	Number of people coming to Turkey	Migration Status
1979	Iran	The Islamic Revolution and establishment of the Khomeini regime	≈ 1 million Iranians	Asylum Seekers
1979	Afghanistan	The Soviet invasion	4350 Afghans in 1982 21.926 Afghans in 2021	Asylum Seekers
1988-1991	Iraq	The Halabja Massacre Saddam Hussein's ethnic cleansing politics targeting Kurds The Gulf War	≈ 500.000 Iraqis	Asylum Seekers
1989	Bulgaria	Assimilation politics of the Jivkov regime	At least 300.000 Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks	Asylum Seekers
1992-1998	Bosnia Herzegovina	Yugoslav Wars	≈ 25.000 Bosnians	Asylum Seekers
1999	Kosova		≈ 18.000 Kosovars	Asylum Seekers
2001	Macedonia	The Macedonian Civil War	10.500 Macedonians	Asylum Seekers
1995-2009	Iraq	Political and economic considerations	461.934	Transit Migrants
	Pakistan			
	Afghanistan			
	Iran			
	Palestine			
	Bangladesh			
	Somalia			
	Mauritania			
	Syria			
	Myanmar (Burma)			
1995-2009	Others	Economic wage differentials	334.560	Irregular Labor Migration
	Moldavia			
	Georgia			
	Romania			
	Russian Federation			
	Ukraine			
	Azerbaijan			
	Bulgaria			
	Germany			

Year(s)	Source Country	Prominent Reasons for Migration	Number of people coming to Turkey	Migration Status
	Armenia			
	Others			
1995-2009	Iraq	A mix of political and economic reasons	796.494	Irregular Migrants, Circular Migrants, Transit Migrants
	Pakistan			
	Afghanistan			
	Moldavia			
	Iran			
	Palestine			
	Georgia			
	Romania			
	Somalia			
	Bangladesh			
	Others			
2011-2022	Syria	Syrian Civil War	3.654.257 Syrians	Asylum Seekers – Syrians under Temporary Protection
2014-2022	Iraq	A mix of political and economic reasons	1.567.392	Irregular Migrants and Asylum Seekers
	Pakistan			
	Afghanistan			
	Syria			
	Moldova			
	Palestine			
	Myanmar (Burma)			
	Georgia			
	Iran			
	Others			

Source: Compiled from available statistics. Akcapar & Çalıřan, *forthcoming*

3. CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first section, a conceptual framework is provided by summarizing the meaning, essence, and goals of social cohesion and integration since these are key terms in the analysis of research questions. Moreover, it continues with a detailed literature review on what the concept of deskilling refers to, the causes and consequences of the term, and the debates in the deskilling literature. In the second section, theoretical debates on deskilling and the main theoretical tenets of the study built upon Zygmunt Bauman's and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts are introduced and discussed.

3.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Heated discussions on how to ensure the adaptation of immigrants that enable them to live as members of the receiving countries by eliminating intergroup conflict and tension do not seem to have formed a consensual understanding yet. One view assumes that a homogeneous majority culture of host societies must be fully embraced and adapted by migrants and refugees, who are also supposed to abandon their own cultural values (Da Lomba, 2010, p. 418). This conceptualization puts the whole responsibility on migrants and refugees while providing a one-way policy model that excludes the responsibility of host states and societies. This approach has been scholarly criticized for not recognizing the cultural and social diversity of refugee and migrant populations and for not providing a solution to those who fail to fulfill their host societies' unilaterally determined adaptation goals (Da Lomba, 2010, p. 418; Strang & Ager, 2010, pp. 592-593).

An opposing view emphasizes the reciprocated involvement of migrant and refugee groups and host societies (ECRE, 1997, as cited in Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 600). However, even though this view shares the responsibility between these two groups, it has an implicit imbalanced power relation in which conditions and framework for integration are created from a receiving-country perspective that ignores the actions, aspirations, competencies, and goals of many migrants and refugee communities (Borselli & van Meijl, 2020, p. 581; Hammond, 2013, p. 1003). That means that the approval of immigrants and refugees as integrated members of the host society can only be possible if they are legitimated by the majority of the host society (Borselli & van Meijl, 2020, p. 581).

The last view is similarly built upon the definition referring to integration as a dynamic, two-way, long-term, and multi-dimensional process between migrant and refugee groups and the members and institutions of receiving societies (ECRE, 2002, p. 4). One study analytically distinguishes legal-political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious dimensions to operate this process (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2015, p. 14). At the same time, the other defines its four core domains as markers and means (employment, housing, education, health), social connections (social bridges, social bonds, social links), facilitators (language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability) and foundation (rights and citizenship) (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 169-170). What makes this view different than the previous ones is that it includes agency; in other words, it draws attention to the aspirations, human capital, and viewpoints of migrants themselves (Borselli & van Meijl, 2020, p. 581; Hammond, 2013, p. 1003; Spencer & Charsley, 2016, p. 7; van Heelsum, 2017, p. 2138).

Scholars have carried out the abovementioned discussions through different terminologies such as integration, social cohesion, acculturation, and assimilation. The term integration, for instance, is widely accepted in the international migration literature, while the concept of social cohesion is used to represent both the social model and policy model adopted in state policies in Turkey, although some scholars simultaneously use both terms (Castles et al., p. 123, Özçürümez & İçduygu, 2020, p. 14). In this research, however, social cohesion and integration are used interchangeably and as substitutes for each other.

Aside from the fact that how to ensure social cohesion is a much-disputed issue, one of the most important points that the above-cited studies have in common is that labor market integration is the greatest facilitator in this process. While the challenges international migration may present are acknowledged, many studies have been written to prove the contribution of immigration to countries' economies while refuting myths such as immigrants are stealing locals' jobs and are depleting welfare budgets without contributing much (Foged & Peri, 2016, pp. 3-4; Hunt, 2010, p. 271; Jauer et al., 2014, p. 26; OECD, 2010, pp. 17-18; OECD, 2012, p. 125; OECD - ILO, 2018, pp. 15-16; Oxford Economics, 2018, pp. 4-6; OECD, 2021, pp. 112-114; Ráczová et al., 2019, p. 12). According to the above-cited studies, refugees, and migrants:

- incline to have higher participation rates in the labor force,
- augment the working-age population,
- fill up labor scarcities timely and effectively by providing a supply of diverse labor that also makes labor markets more flexible,
- increase incomes and employment opportunities for both countries of origin and destination,
- make significant net contributions to tax revenue and social contributions,
- positively affect the public purse,
- stimulate trade, investment, and remittances through their transnational ties
- transfer human, informational, social, and cultural capital.

Despite their envisioned benefits for economic development, the barriers that refugees and migrants have faced might be intensified due to the presence of social stigmatization, xenophobia, discriminatory practices, policies, and legislation. Refugees and migrants face challenges in finding and maintaining a decent job, receiving payments, enjoying employment rights, and getting formal degrees and work experience recognized (Kalantaryan, 2016, p. 15). Even if granted a work permit, they are oftentimes excluded from engaging in the labor market (Mayblin, 2014, p. 376; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006, p. 1721). Furthermore, they suffer from forced labor, discrimination, exclusion, and racism while undertaking one or multiple low-skilled and insecure jobs with extreme working conditions where they are paid lower wages (Kalantaryan, 2016, pp. 15-16; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006, pp. 1718,1721; Waite et al., 2013, pp. 7-8).

Another barrier that migrants and refugees usually face is associated with the non-recognition of skills and qualifications, which prevent them from integrating into the labor market and society and prevent labor markets from utilizing their human capital. From the integration-based perspective, refugees and migrants with higher formal skills and qualifications have been seen as those who can be easily integrated into society and the labor market (Huber et al., 2010, p. 20; Scheibelhofer & Täubig, 2019, p. 1). Yet, in many circumstances, most of the skilled and highly skilled ones often work in jobs for which their skills and qualifications are under-utilized owing to the fact that their foreign credentials, professional experience, cultural know-how, and language proficiency are not recognized in the host countries (Andersson, 2021, pp. 1-3; Krahn et al., 2000 p. 60; Siar, 2013, p. 2; Sommer, 2021, p. 1; Sparreboom & Tarvid, 2017, p. 13).

The phenomenon mentioned above has drawn the interest of researchers who have focused on the experiences of immigrants and refugees living in different countries while using different conceptualizations such as deskilling (Creese & Wiebe, 2009; Man, 2004; Mojab, 2000; Siar, 2013), brain waste (Elo, Aman, & Taube, 2020; Mattoo, Neagu, & Özden, 2006; Sommer, 2021), skill mismatch (Sparreboom & Tarvid, 2017), downward occupational mobility (Krahn et al., 2000), devaluation or brain abuse (Bauder, 2003; Boyd & Thomas, 2002). This study, however, prefers the term deskilling while referring to the non-recognition of foreign credentials and work experiences in the countries of destination.

Literature has scrutinized that transition of migrants' labor from skilled to deskilled while shifting from one country to another happens as a result of the discriminated, racialized, and gendered neoliberal institutional processes in host countries' labor market (Boyd & Thomas, 2002, p. 78; Elo, Aman, & Taube, 2020, p. 6; Man, 2004, p. 136). One study, for instance, compares males who are educated in Canada and the foreign-born ones who are educated in their homeland and later arrive in Canada and spotlights the racialized and discriminated characteristics of the labor market where the latter are less likely to be employed in managerial, engineering, technical and similar high-prestigious occupations (Boyd & Thomas, 2002). Another study similarly puts forth that refugees are more likely than natives to be unemployed or to be employed in part-time and temporary jobs in labor markets where re-entering their previous professional and managerial positions is extremely difficult for them (Krahn et al., 2000, pp. 81-82).

Other studies suggest that racialized and discriminated practices leading to deskilling are embedded in employers' prevailing prejudices regarding education and work experience obtained outside the receiving society and their intentional tendencies to shrink the value attained to the human capital of immigrants and refugees in order to reduce labor costs and enhance profits, and in a lack of institutionalized systems for the recognition of foreign credentials (Boyd & Thomas, 2002, pp. 73-74; Creese & Wiebe, 2009, pp. 57-58; Niraula & Valentin, 2019, pp. 22-23; Siar, 2013, p. 8; Sommer, 2021, pp. 1-2). By devaluing educational and professional experience, negatively affecting recruitment processes, occupations held, and wages earned, according to these studies, deskilling causes immigrants and refugees to face more problems than domestically educated people in participating in labor markets which creates a hierarchy itself where refugees are even more negatively and disproportionately affected than immigrants.

Deskilling has significant gendered implications as well. Extant research shows that highly skilled migrant and refugee women are more likely than men to be channeled into insecure, low-status, and part-time jobs, become unemployed and be employed in jobs which they are overqualified for or unrelated to their professional skills and qualifications while suffering from gender-based discrimination at workplaces (Creese & Wiebe, 2009, p. 57; Kofman, 2012; Man, 2004; Mojab, 2000; Sert, 2016, p. 112). They have lower-level positions and make less money than their male counterparts, who are almost equally educated and qualified as themselves. (Sparreboom & Tarvid, 2017, p. 8).

The gendered dimension of deskilling has been discussed through neoliberalism, a new economic model that valorizes privatization and structural adjustments over the socio-economic policies based on Keynesian "*state interventionism*," which was started to be abandoned in the late 1970s (Man, 2004, p. 137). Thanks to the withdrawal of blue-collar workers from production due to the rapid development of automation and information systems, and eventually the decrease in the share of labor-intensive sectors, the neoliberal system has structured mass unemployment on a global scale while expanding flexibility in labor markets (Bora & Erdoğan, 2015, p. 30). The share of temporary and seasonal work, including piecework, has enormously grown in the flexible labor market over the last few decades, leading more people to work and live as precariats (Standing, 2011, p. 15). This new form of the global labor order where flexible and cheap labor is prioritized has deepened the existing inequalities in society by creating division

on the basis and intersection of identities such as women, immigrants, and refugees as they are seen as the source of disposable labor (Man, 2004, p. 137; Standing, 2011, pp. 59-63). Through flexibility, neoliberal policies make more women, migrants, and refugees engage in informal jobs.

With the privatization of previously state-subsidized social programs such as healthcare and child/elderly care, the domestic burden on women has intensified, and gender relations have begun to encode, restructure and regulate both in private and public spheres (Brodie, 1995, p. 54; Cornwall, Gideon & Wilson, 2008; Scharff, 2016; Shields, 1996). Therefore, lower-class women have been forced to leave their jobs or engage in low-paying, insecure part-time jobs to undertake these caring needs in their home, while the middle and upper-class women with higher skills and education mostly transfer their burdens to immigrant women, which represents one of the reasons for feminization of migration. Immigrant and refugee women with higher skills and education who have to take up these kinds of jobs in the informal sectors as survival employment are therefore being deskilled in the receiving countries (Creese & Wiebe, 2009). They are prevented from working full-time jobs and fulfilling the requirements for skill recognition, such as taking language or professional competence courses. Moreover, their burden is exacerbated at home as they are seen as primary caregivers in the absence of social welfare systems and family or hired help in the new country (Man, 2004, p. 145).

Regarding the outcomes of deskilling, it can be said that deskilling, on a micro-level, has negative repercussions causing financial, psychological, and health problems for migrants and refugees while, on a macro-level, it is assessed as having negative consequences for countries of origin as they lose their skilled workforce and for countries of destination, as their capacities are not fully utilized (Siar, 2013, pp. 2-3). Deskilling usually hinders the full utilization of newcomers' skills and integration processes. On the other hand, recognition of prior learning that abolishes deskilling offers many benefits to migrants and refugees, such as (1) diversifying employment opportunities and facilitating their full labor market integration of destination countries, (2) easing the recognition process, and credit transfer while reducing costs and time, (3) boosting their self-esteem and (4) enhancing employment opportunities in the country of origin for returnees whose skills and qualifications are formalized abroad (ILO, 2020, p. 25). Furthermore, it assists

employers in accurately identifying employees' qualification and skill gaps in organizations while sufficiently matching employees and jobs (ILO, 2020, p. 26).

Despite an increased economic interest in their skills and qualifications, skills recognition processes are still being developed (Scheibelhofer & Täubig, 2019, pp. 3-5). It is stated that recognition of prior learning outcomes contributes to the aim of ensuring social cohesion by ensuring that locals treat migrant and refugee workers fairly and reducing prejudice against them (Dietz, Esses, & Bennett-AbuAyyash, 2009, pp. 26-30). Another study also emphasizes the swift and effective recognition of foreign qualifications and skills as a crucial factor for the successful integration of refugees; therefore, in case of no documentary proof of skills and qualifications, alternative assessment techniques are encouraged to be employed (OECD, 2016, p. 30).

Not surprisingly, the importance of skill recognition draws attention within the scope of migration management and is stipulated by international declarations and labor standards. Accordingly, two global compacts on the international declaration of migration highlight its importance while calling the international community for "*recognition of skills and qualifications among refugees and migrants in host communities*" (Global Compact for Migration, 2018; Global Compact on Refugees, 2018). These compacts also emphasize the importance of utilization and development of the capacities and skills of women and young refugees in particular. Similarly, ILO labor standards underscore the significance of special provisions aiming at ensuring recognition and certification of skills and qualifications, "*including prior learning and previous experience, irrespective of the countries where they were acquired and whether acquired formally or informally*" (ILO, 2004; 2017).

3.2.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The earliest theoretical debate to explain why and how deskilling occurs and persists can be associated with the one Michael J. Piore (1979) conducts in his book titled "*Birds of passage: Migrant labor and industrial societies*" (Siar, 2013, p. 7). Piore has based his thoughts off of the dual labor market hypothesis, which consists of *a primary market* where the jobs are predominantly held by natives and *a secondary market* in which the jobs are reserved for immigrants (Piore, 1979, p. 35). The distinction between the two

lies at the root of the fact that the former is a capital-intensive market consisting of higher-skilled and higher status jobs relying on less labor while the latter is labor-intensive, utilizing less capital market which is made up of unskilled and unsecured jobs (Piore, 1979, pp. 36-40).

The emergence of this duality coincides with the period of economic expansion when the native labor force has given up the jobs in the secondary market for the ones in the primary market of higher paying, more prestigious jobs (Piore, 1979, p. 27). This occurrence leads to labor shortages in the secondary market, which is ready to fill up by foreign workers regardless of whether they are lower-skilled or highly skilled (Piore, 1979, p. 28). These workers are excluded from good jobs reserved for natives by the national restrictions, which are built up from a host country's perspective that perceive these foreign workers as temporary – even those workers consider themselves as such (Piore, 1979, pp. 28, 56-57). The presence of exclusionist national restrictions and a secondary market, therefore, as the model implies, causes deskilling to translate highly-educated migrants as cheap, temporary labor serving the market's needs.

Another theoretical debate put forth by Harald Bauder, based on interviews conducted with South Asian and Yugoslavian migrants living in Canada, suggests that the systematic exclusion of migrant labor from highly skilled jobs is intentionally aimed to save these jobs for natives by the state and professional associations (Bauder, 2003, pp. 699-700). Taking up Pierre Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital as a point of departure, Bauder particularly focuses on institutionalized cultural capital, which refers to cultural competency achieved by institutional recognition such as a diploma, an educational degree, and training, and considers it as an important tool to be used for the reproduction of existing class structure (2003, pp. 701-702). In his argument, Bauder claims that a strict certification system determined by the state and professional associations favors natives in order to ensure that native-borns maintain their superior status while ignoring migrants' skills and competencies, which leads to their human capital being devaluated and make them suffer occupational downward mobility (2003, pp. 702,713). This strategy intentionally employed by host countries' agencies is also pointed out as the evident method of deskilling by other studies focusing on different cases, including the ones examining the experiences of highly skilled Indian and Chinese migrants living in New Zealand (Henderson, Trlin, & Watts, 2013; Trlin, Henderson, &

North, 2004), and the one with the case of sub-Saharan Africans in Canada (Creese & Wiebe, 2009).

Building upon this brief theoretical discussion, this thesis, is based on two theoretical perspectives. Firstly, Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualization of the "stranger" will be used. According to Bauman, migrants and refugees of the modern cities who suddenly knock on natives' doors are pointed out as strangers who come in large numbers while causing anxiety and fear, destroying the things natives cherished and wiping out a familiar way of life (2016, p. 5). Before encountering strangers, natives, in other words, *we* used to divide the people we are accustomed to living with in the same neighborhood, on the street, at work, into either our friends or enemies (Bauman, 1998, p. 54; 2016, p. 5).

After their appearance unexpectedly and uninvitedly at our doors which has been neither caused nor controlled by us, we start to encounter and live together with plenty of strangers (Bauman, 2011, p. 178). However, we are not able to assign a new category to them in our mindset; they are neither our friends nor our enemies (Bauman, 1998, p. 56). We do not know enough about their behaviors; we cannot guess their intentions and decide how to respond appropriately (Bauman, 2016, p. 5). To us, they are undecidable (Bauman, 1998, p. 56). As they make the cognitive and moral boundaries accepted as a base to lead a normal and regular flow of life ambiguous, the stranger is accused of pushing the limits of tolerance and disturbing the peace (Bauman, 1998, pp. 14,56).

According to Bauman, the experience of living with strangers in the postmodern time is related to the spatial segregation dynamics and consumption relations in modern cities which have become the sum of different areas having blurred borders and being distinguished with both the type of its permanent residents and of random strangers who are likely to go there or pass through (Bauman, 2001, p. 89). "*The odiousness of strangers*" is experienced in different intensities by the residents with different characteristics living in different districts of the city who are stratified based on the ability to disregard the presence of strangers (Bauman, 2001, p. 89). However, as the resources needed to have this ability are not equally distributed among residents, not all can maintain an avoidance strategy and have freedom of mobility (Bauman, 2001, pp. 89-90).

Those who are able to do this do not tend to constrain and be disturbed by the presence of strangers; therefore, for them, strangers are not threatening but rather pleasurable because they are in charge of determining how their encounters would be and when their encounters with strangers start and come to an end (Bauman, 2001, pp. 90-91). To the other ones, who perceive the world as a trap and do not have enough power and money to choose where they live, whom they live with, and whom they encounter; however, strangers seem so powerful and are considered a threat to their own existence because strangers remind them of their own weaknesses (Bauman, 2001, p. 91; 2016, p. 5).

As a second theoretical perspective to analyze the strategies that highly skilled women have developed over the years to reconstruct their habitus and identities in Turkey, Pierre Bourdieu's metaphor of game will be utilized since international migration resembles a game field in which different agents and groups of agents with their own influence, rules, relationship, and power structures. To understand the game metaphor, it is first important to define the *field* where the game is played. According to Bourdieu, a field is a dynamic space of forces composed of a group of power relations imposing themselves on anyone entering the field (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724).

Players, or in other words, active agents, who are supposed to accept the game's own set of rules, *doxas*, without knowingly, are assigned to a certain position in the field (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724). What triggers agents to play the game is defined by Bourdieu as *illusio*, a specific form of interest that implies to players that the game is worth playing (quoted in Wacquant, 1989, p. 42). Agents or groups of agents should compete with the others to capture the better and more prestigious positions in the field by using their existing capitals (cultural, economic, social, and symbolic) in different amounts and forms or acquiring new ones.

The volume and composition of capital that agents possess in the field represent the powers that they have (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724). Bourdieu defines four types of capital which are economic, social, cultural, and symbolic. While economic capital refers to the one that can be immediately and directly converted into money or institutionalized as property, social capital is a type of capital that consists of social connections that can be transformed into economic capital, again under certain conditions, and that can be

institutionalized through a title of nobility (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). Cultural capital, on the other hand, is a type of capital that can be transformed into economic capital under certain conditions and institutionalized through education (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). There are three different types of cultural capital: 1) Embodied cultural capital reflects the mind through physical representation, 2) Objectified cultural capital is embedded in the consumption of cultural products such as books, pictures, etc. 3) Institutionalised cultural capital refers to cultural competence acquired by institutional regulations including diploma and certificate (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). Lastly, symbolic capital is the type of capital that is in close relationship with other types of capital and has a cognitive basis determined by those who have power over knowledge and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 256).

The meaning of habitus as one of the key concepts should be emphasized here. While referring to the concept, Bourdieu states that:

“System of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively regulated and regular without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 72)

Habitus basically refers to something historically and socially constructed that enables agents to make sense of themselves and the social world surrounding them, guides them on how to act appropriately and reasonably, and makes them feel they belong somewhere or in a group. On the other hand, habitus also imposes restrictions on agents' thoughts, perceptions, and actions, showing its durable and resistant-to-change feature (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 95). However, habitus is not fixed. As an important factor that is often overlooked, time has the power to affect and transform agents' dispositions while giving them enough freedom to think clearly about their already existing and newly created strategies in the field (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 9).

The following chapters will clarify in detail why these concepts and theoretical perspectives are useful in not only explaining deskilling that the respondents experienced after their arrival in Turkey but also different strategies they adopted with the objective of achieving their previous lifestyle back in homeland, reconstructing their identity and class positions by preserving their habitus and capitals in the country of refuge, i.e. Turkey.



4. CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter firstly provides the research design, including philosophy, paradigm, and methods. In other words, this research's ontological, epistemological, and methodological bases are analyzed to indicate the researcher's philosophical stance and the ways of obtaining reliable knowledge about the research object. To this aim, the following pages therefore provide a detailed description of the research site, participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis. In the last section, the experiences and self-reflexivity of the researcher while conducting the fieldwork during the pandemic period are also shared.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

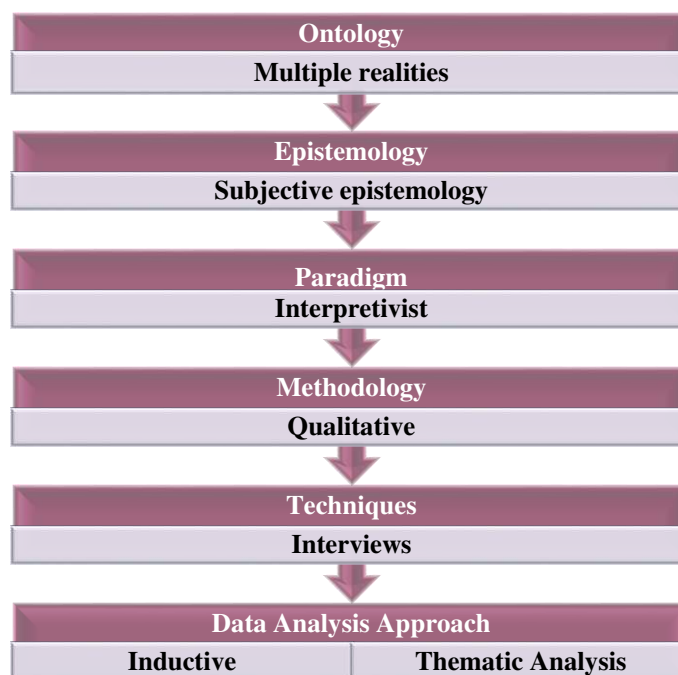
There are three main ideal types that are distilled from the discussions and arguments on how to carry out scientific research studying the social world: positivist, interpretive and critical social science (Neuman, 2014, p. 96). These three approaches are associated with different ontological and epistemological foundations as well as methodological standpoints. The approaches are similar to research paradigms which refer to the researcher's beliefs and assumptions and the important questions, models, and methods of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 195; Neuman, 2013, p. 96).

This research is based on interpretative social science, whose theoretical framework is often linked to the German sociologist Max Weber. Weber referred to social action as human action, which is subjectively related to the behavior of others, and stated that sociology should focus on social action with a purpose (Crotty, 1998; Weber, 1981, as cited in Neuman, 2014, p. 103). He articulated social action as the primary object or

the atom of interpretative social science, which, according to him, should be concerned with *Verstehen*, in other words, the empathetic understanding of everyday life (Weber, 1970 as cited in Crotty, 1998; Neuman, 2014, p. 103).

Research-based on interpretive social science is usually methodologically constructed through adapting qualitative research method. The philosophical bases of these studies are summarized as follows according to ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations: Ontology is simply defined as the study of being (Crotty, 1998). In qualitative research, researchers embrace the fact that there are multiple realities deriving from multiple interpretations of experience and intent to report these realities (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). With the epistemological assumption referring to "*a way of understanding and explaining how I know what I know*," qualitative researchers acknowledge that knowledge is "*always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity*"; thus, they assemble subjective experiences of people from the field in which individuals live and/or work (Creswell, 2013, p. 20; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). They also recognize the axiological assumption that accepts the value-laden nature of the study in which researchers position themselves by announcing their values and biases (Creswell, 2013, p. 20).

Figure 4.1: The Bases of This Research



Qualitative research is used to collect empirical data that let the researcher inform about research problems addressing the meaning the observer(s) ascribe to a social problem (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Qualitative researchers speak a language of cultural meaning that is usually embedded in soft data that comes in the form of written/spoken words, symbols, photos, etc. (Neuman, 2014, pp. 167,204). They also acknowledge the political, socio-economic, and cultural context in which the research is conducted (Neuman, 2014, p. 20). Moreover, qualitative research is carried out in a natural setting where researchers are able to have face-to-face interaction through talking to and seeing participants who experience the research problem (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). Rich and nuanced data is collected in qualitative research by using multiple methods such as interviews and observations and is inductively analyzed to get its themes, patterns, and categories revealed (Creswell, 2013, p. 45).

Qualitative research is particularly considered an important approach for migration studies, as it enables to explore of the migration dynamics' complex, conjunctural, and multi-faceted dimensions while giving insights provided by migrant and refugee groups as well as other stakeholders who are oftentimes excluded from participation and representation process of mainstream society and politics (Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018, p. 3). It also enables researchers to understand migration as a social phenomenon that has ambiguous yet sensitive dynamics from the perspectives of those who have experienced it by themselves, to analyze their motivations and expectations, to see the impact of migration on their lives, the arduous processes they have gone through and their experiences in new and unfamiliar settlements (Kümbetoğlu, 2013, p. 59)

4.2. SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE

Adapting the qualitative research method, this study has gathered its empirical data through multi-sited field research conducted with women aged 25 to 55 from Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq living in Ankara, Bursa, Gaziantep, Istanbul, and Mersin (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Five Cities Where Field Research Was Conducted



One reason for choosing these five provinces is the fact that they are metropolitan cities where agglomeration of job opportunities in various sectors occurs, which attracts many people who want to find a job regardless of their educational background. Except for agriculture in Istanbul and Ankara and for the information and communication sector in Bursa, Gaziantep, and Mersin, these five cities, indeed, contribute considerably to gross domestic product (GDP) in each of the economic activity areas indicated in Table 4.1. The other reason for choosing Istanbul, Gaziantep, Bursa, and Mersin is mainly the high number of refugees living in these cities (see Figure 4.3). On the other hand, the reason for choosing Ankara is that many of the headquarters of international organizations, such as the International Labor Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as well as non-governmental organizations such as Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) are located in the capital city.

Brief information on these provinces is provided below:

- **Istanbul:** With hosting over 15,8 million residents, Istanbul is the most urbanized and densely populated province of Turkey (TurkStat, 2021a). Based on the data reported by the Turkish Statistical Institute for the year 2020, Istanbul reached the highest GDP and received a share of 30,1% of the total gross domestic product while ranking first in information and

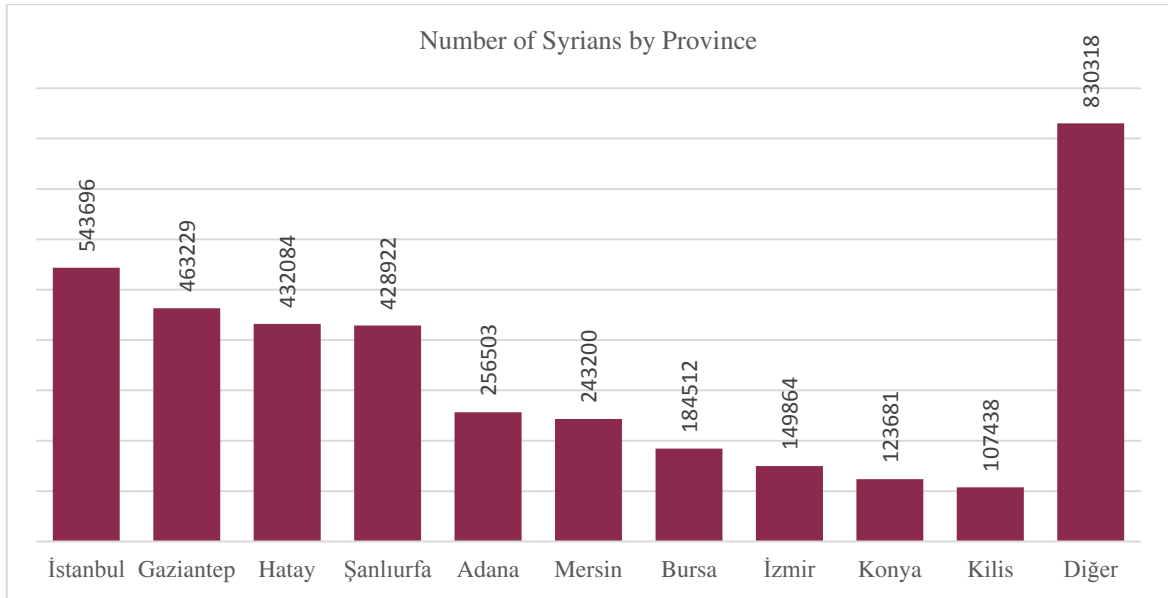
communication activities, industry, finance, and insurance activities, professional, administrative and support service, construction sector and service sector which means that it offers countless job opportunities in diverse sectors except for agriculture (TurkStat, 2021b) (see Table 4.1). According to the Socioeconomic Development Index (SDI), which is estimated based on eight sub-indices such as demography, employment, education, health, competitive and progressive capacity, financial variables, accessibility, and prosperity, along with 52 socioeconomic variables, Istanbul is ranked the 1st place out of 81 provinces for the year of 2017 (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2017). Regarding migration trends, Istanbul has always been an important destination for internal and international migrants. Having the largest international migrant population with a proportion of 45,3%, Istanbul also hosts 543.696 Syrians under temporary protection, while the number of those under international protection is unknown (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022a; TurkStat, 2020).

- **Ankara:** As the capital and second-largest province of Turkey with 5,7 million residents, Ankara has been a host to many governmental, international, and non-governmental organizations working on migration and related issues (TurkStat, 2021a). For the year 2020, Ankara reached the second-highest GDP with 482 billion 589 million TRY, which constitutes a 9,6% share of the total GDP (TurkStat, 2021a, 2021b). The activities that contribute the most to GDP are industry, professional, administrative and support service, service sector, and manufacturing (TurkStat, 2021b). Moreover, Ankara is ranked 2nd place out of 81 provinces in Turkey in the Socioeconomic Development Index (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2017). Based on the statistics on migration, it is stated that there are 62.616 immigrants and 97.741 Syrians under temporary protection living in Ankara (Presidency of Migration Management, 2020; TurkStat, 2020).
- **Bursa:** The fourth most-populated province of Turkey, Bursa has a population of over 3,14 million (TurkStat, 2021a). Bursa made a negative contribution to the annual GDP with a 0,08 % change in 2020 (TurkStat, 2021b). The industry sector constituted the highest share of the total GDP of Bursa with 39,9%,

followed by manufacturing with 37,7% and the service sector with 20,6% (TurkStat, 2021b). The province is also ranked 6th on the Socioeconomic Development Index (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2017). Moreover, migration trends demonstrate that Bursa host 23.362 immigrants as of 2019 and 184.512 Syrians under temporary protection as of 2022 (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022a; TurkStat, 2020).

- **Gaziantep:** Hosting over 2,13 million residents, Gaziantep is Turkey's ninth most urbanized and densely populated province (TurkStat, 2021a). Ranking 30th place on the SDI, Gaziantep had the second-largest contribution with 0.21% to the annual GDP in 2020 (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2017; TurkStat, 2021b). The growing sectors in Gaziantep are industry, manufacturing, service, and professional, administrative, and support service, respectively. The number of immigrants living in Gaziantep is calculated as 6379, while the number of Syrians is 463.229, which implies that it is the second city, following Istanbul, with the highest number of Syrians under temporary protection (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022a; TurkStat, 2020).
- **Mersin:** As the eleventh most-populated city with almost 1,9 million residents, Mersin is ranked the 25th most-developed province of Turkey (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2017; TurkStat, 2021a). Mersin had the fourth-largest contribution with 0,13% to the annual GDP in 2020 (TurkStat, 2021b). Apart from the four cities mentioned above, Mersin has a considerable share in agriculture along with service, industry, manufacturing, and construction sectors. Moreover, 12.740 immigrants and 243.200 Syrians under temporary protection are registered in Mersin (Presidency of Migration Management, 2022a; TurkStat, 2020).

Figure 4.3: Number of Syrians by Province



Source: Presidency of Migration Management, 2022

Table 4.1: The Share of The Five Provinces in GDP by Economic Activity

Sector \ Province	Istanbul	Bursa	Ankara	Mersin	Gaziantep
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	1.985.818	8.208.826	8.836.044	11.528.521	4.702.542
Industry	270.913.542	81.187.908	83.018.889	14.126.264	40.951.274
Manufacturing	236.182.557	76.772.092	64.922.227	11.987.525	38.907.910
Construction	87.842.874	7.128.231	35.129.256	6.327.516	4.178.310
Services	460.039.836	41.769.873	81.564.779	30.674.570	17.445.574
Information and communication	89.280.961	1.711.670	26.361.056	404.254	292.492
Financial and insurance activities	109.903.812	4.037.819	15.821.907	1.997.108	1.599.470
Real estate activities	95.934.425	11.335.921	24.282.331	4.625.053	4.816.524
Professional, administrative, and support service activities	110.799.083	7.185.463	28.268.135	3.659.865	2.757.942
Public administration, education, human health, and social work activities	98.721.777	15.664.964	80.981.203	11.622.308	10.606.941
Other service activities	23.471.458	2.436.512	44.755.506	943.134	902.853
Sectoral total	1.348.893.585	180.667.189	429.019.106	85.908.592	88.253.922
Taxes-subsidies	168.430.031	22.559.067	53.569.608	10.727.004	11.019.854
GDP	1.517.323.616	203.226.255	482.588.714	96.635.595	99.273.776
Net contribution	-0,09	-0,08	0,13	0,21	0,59

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, 2021b

4.3. SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Based on a qualitative research framework, this research adapted diverse data collection techniques, including formal and informal in-depth face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, direct observation, statistics, and official records. To gather, analyze and interpret empirical data, multi-sited field research was conducted with 50 refugee women who were asked to narrate their life stories and experiences regarding the research topic through open-ended interviews with a loosely formulated questionnaire. Due to pandemic restrictions on mobility, fieldwork was carried out in Mersin, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Bursa, and Ankara between April and June 2021.

The selection process of the participants did not claim to be representative of the whole group from which the sample is taken due to the nature of qualitative research in which nonprobability samples are often used to gradually choose participants in accordance with the purpose of the research topic (Neuman, 2014, p. 273). Purposive and snowball techniques – among the types of nonprobability samples – were therefore adopted in this research to recruit the interviewees through using referrals and gatekeepers as it was required to reach participants who fit into particular criteria of having at least a bachelor's degree and work experience.

In proportion to the estimated number of refugees in the cities, 18 participants in Istanbul, 15 in Gaziantep, eight in Mersin, six in Bursa, and three in Ankara were interviewed during the field research. Besides, two focus group interviews with NGO representatives were held. After the face-to-face field research was completed, informal online or telephone follow-up interviews were also conducted with some participants. The majority of the participants were selected from Syrians (n=36), followed by Afghans (n=6), Iraqis (n=4), and Iranians (n=4) based on the estimation of refugee women from these four countries in direct proportion to the size of their own community.

Subsequently reading, organizing, and condensing the collected raw data, certain themes were assigned to information compiled during the field research through MAXQDA 2020. These themes were developed based on the participants' experiences and meanings; however, they were coded, recoded, and guided by the theoretical framework mentioned in Section 3.2. Relevant themes and selected accounts of the

participants were accompanied by all available migration statistics, including UNHCR, Presidency of Migration Management, and OECD, which were utilized as the primary databases to draw a statistical framework regarding refugee women's participation in the labor markets in Turkey.

Information about the participants is provided briefly in Table 4.2 and, more broadly, in Table 4.3. Accordingly, the average age of the participants was calculated as 36,12, with a minimum value of 27 and a maximum value of 52. Thirty-four participants were married, twelve were single, and four were divorced. Based on the distribution of educational status, forty participants hold a bachelor's degree, and ten with a master's degree. In addition to eighteen unemployed participants, thirty-two were employed at the time of interviews, of which sixteen would informally work.

Table 4.2: Brief Information on The Participants

Variables	Participants	Variables	Participants
Age		Education Level	
Average Age	36,12	Bachelor	40
Minimum-Maximum	27-52	Master's Degree	10
Marital Status		Employment Status	
Single	12	Not Employed	18
Married	34	Employed	32
Divorced	4	Employment Type	
Nationality		Informal	16
Syrian	36	Formal	16
Afghan	6		
Iraqi	4		
Iranian	4		

Table 4.3: The Participant List

Age	Marital Status	Nationality	Ethnicity	City of Residence	Education Level	Degree	Employment Status	Formal/ Informal	Current Job
31	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Nursing	Employed	Formal	Journalist
46	Single	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Master's Degree	Medicine	Employed	Informal	Doctor
44	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Master's Degree	Law	Employed	Formal	Bakery
45	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Psychology	Unemployed		
46	Married	Syria	Kurd	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Mechanical Engineering	Unemployed		
38	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Master's Degree	Early Childhood Education + Finance	Unemployed		
32	Single	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Graphic Design	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
43	Divorced	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Mechanical Engineering	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
30	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Master's Degree	Early Childhood Education	Unemployed		
33	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Master's Degree	Economy	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
52	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Mechanical Engineering	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
30	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Biology	Unemployed + Master's student		
32	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Civil Engineering	Employed	Informal	Software Developer
35	Married	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Arabic Literature	Employed	Informal	NGO worker
32	Single	Syria	Arab	Gaziantep	Bachelor's Degree	Arabic Literature	Employed	Informal	NGO worker
31	Single	Iran	Kurd	Istanbul	Master's Degree	English Literature	Employed	Informal	Teacher
42	Divorced	Iran	Farsi	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	English Literature	Unemployed		
37	Married	Iran	Farsi	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Environmental Engineering	Employed	Informal	Software Developer
32	Divorced	Iran	Farsi	Istanbul	Master's Degree	Accounting	Unemployed		

Age	Marital Status	Nationality	Ethnicity	City of Residence	Education Level	Degree	Employment Status	Formal/ Informal	Current Job
30	Married	Syria	Arab	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Islamic Finance	Employed	Formal	Journalist
33	Married	Syria	Arab	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Conservatory	Employed	Formal	Journalist
32	Married	Syria	Kurd	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Food Engineering	Unemployed		
38	Divorced	Syria	Arab	Istanbul	Master's Degree	Medicine	Employed	Formal	Doctor
33	Married	Iraq	Turkmen	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Medicine	Unemployed		
29	Single	Iraq	Kurd	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Nursing	Employed	Formal	IOM-Nurse
41	Married	Afghanistan	-	Istanbul	Master's Degree	Medicine	Unemployed		
30	Married	Afghanistan	-	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Conservatory	Unemployed		
28	Single	Afghanistan	-	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Law	Unemployed + Bachelor's student		
27	Single	Afghanistan	-	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Early Childhood Education	Employed + Bachelor Student	Informal	NGO worker
45	Married	Afghanistan	-	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Medicine	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
45	Married	Syria	Turkmen	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	English Literature	Employed	Informal	Journalist
35	Married	Syria	Arab	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Business	Employed	Informal	NGO worker
33	Single	Syria	Turkmen	Istanbul	Bachelor's Degree	Biology	Employed	Informal	NGO worker
34	Married	Iraq	Turkmen	Ankara	Bachelor's Degree	Nursing	Unemployed		
45	Married	Afghanistan	-	Ankara	Master's Degree	Medicine	Unemployed		
47	Married	Iraq	Turkmen	Ankara	Bachelor's Degree	Nursing	Employed	Informal	Arabic Teacher
31	Married	Syria	Arab	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	English Literature	Unemployed		
30	Single	Syria	Arab	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	Theology	Employed	Formal	Student Assistance
29	Married	Syria	Arab	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	Arabic Education	Unemployed		
32	Single	Syria	Arab	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	Dentistry	Employed	Informal	Dentist

Age	Marital Status	Nationality	Ethnicity	City of Residence	Education Level	Degree	Employment Status	Formal/ Informal	Current Job
34	Married	Syria	Arab	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	Law	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
30	Single	Syria	Arab	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	Graphic Design	Employed	Informal	NGO worker
48	Married	Syria	Kurd	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	Business Administration	Employed	Formal	Bakery owner
34	Married	Syria	Arab	Mersin	Bachelor's Degree	Arabic Literature	Employed	Informal	Arabic Teacher
29	Single	Syria	Arab	Bursa	Bachelor's Degree	Economy	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
38	Married	Syria	Arab	Bursa	Bachelor's Degree	Civil Engineering	Employed	Formal	NGO worker
48	Married	Syria	Arab	Bursa	Bachelor's Degree	Arabic Literature	Unemployed		
34	Married	Syria	Arab	Bursa	Bachelor's Degree	Journalism	Employed	Informal	Journalist
40	Married	Syria	Kurd	Bursa	Bachelor's Degree	English Literature	Unemployed		
33	Married	Syria	Arab	Bursa	Bachelor's Degree	English Literature	Employed	Informal	Journalist

4.4. REFLECTIONS FROM THE FIELD ON CONDUCTING A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DURING THE PANDEMIC

The research was carried out between April and June 2021, when there were still pandemic-related curfews – from 10 pm to 5 am on weekdays – and weekend lockdowns in effect. At that time, not only the mobility restrictions were affecting people, but also the envisioned economic, social, and psychological impacts of the pandemic started to show their dire faces, which has disrupted the natural flow of life since. In an atmosphere where people's ability to access resources was restricted while struggling to reach their pre-pandemic normality, the way conducting social research itself has stood out as something that needs to be questioned under these extraordinary conditions.

Many social scientists have been forced first to understand the current situation, then adapt their original research plans by tailoring and redesigning the initial epistemological and methodological standpoints to these new circumstances as resources, participants, and traditional research techniques have become suddenly inaccessible (Akcapar & Çalışan, 2022; Howlett, 2021). This necessity has been particularly challenging for those adapting qualitative and mixed methods aiming at conducting fieldwork. Employing online research techniques such as surveys and digital ethnographies, which have been used for many years in social research, has seemed to be a great facilitator for these researchers relying on the advancement and opportunities offered by modern information and communication technologies (Hine, 2015; Kozinets, 2010).

However, the emergence of online techniques, which used to be a choice, as a must in the new conditions of the pandemic has also alerted social researchers that there may be some pitfalls to be considered (Howlett, 2021, p. 2). Those pitfalls might arise as a result of the asymmetrical relations established between the investigators and investigated during an interview relationship which would trigger symbolic violence exerted by the researcher who has the power to start the game, set up the rules, and assign the study's objectives as being the one who owns different types of capital – especially cultural and linguistic ones (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 609). Bearing in mind these, what the researchers should do is to close all the ways allowing symbolic violence as much as

possible and establish and maintain active listening and “non-violent communication” during the session (Bourdieu, 1999, pp. 607-609).

An asymmetric relation is highly affected by and dependent on a field that is hierarchical in nature – in other words, power relations to be established either in online fieldwork or in face-to-face fieldwork are expected to be different from each other. Some research carried out during the pandemic stresses the challenges that have been faced while conducting online interviews, which are summarized as follows (Akcapar & Çalışan, 2022; Howlett, 2021; Sedysheva, 2020; Yüksel & Ergün, 2022):

- the role of the researcher as the host and the participant as the guest in the communication that is controlled and dominated by the researcher
- the fact that the participant sees the researcher within the borders of a screen and cannot interfere with the area beyond those borders
- the lack of a healthy communication and interaction environment as a result of the participants' unwillingness to open their cameras
- being highly dependent on the availability of technical opportunities for interviews which is particularly a visible challenge when it comes to working with vulnerable groups such as migrants and refugees who have a disadvantaged position in the digital divide, which is a concept to refer to the distinction between those who have access to new information technologies, including digital equipment such as computers, mobile phones and internet networks, and those who do not.
- the risk of clustering the participant profile in some categories and underrepresentation of certain social groups, particularly those having multiple vulnerabilities, as each person's use and preferences of and access to telecommunications applications and social media platforms differs based on variables such as their age, gender, educational status, socio-economic status and whether they live in urban or rural areas.

Taking into account all these considerable methodological pitfalls emerging in online studies and preventing the researchers from establishing a balanced relationship, this study aimed to carry out traditional fieldwork to eliminate these issues and produce detailed, reliable scientific knowledge. The researcher's self-reflexive experiences as the

subject of the knowledge generation process were meant to be shared in detail and to be discussed with other researchers since it has been prominent as an enlightening process that would enable the *new normal* in methodology to be understood in the up-to-date scholarship (Akcapar & Çalışan, 2022, p. 17).¹

Before starting to conduct field research, I spent a few days doing some informal interviews with gatekeepers and NGO representatives in order to reach the participants who meet the criteria of the research and live in the five cities specified. I spent five days in Mersin, seven days in Gaziantep, seven days in İstanbul, five days in Bursa, and five days in Ankara, respectively. As I arranged the meetings before going to these cities, I did not lose any time in reaching participants. Depending on their request, some interviews took place in the participant's homes and some in public areas such as cafes and parks. The shortest interview lasted 40 minutes, and the longest was 100 minutes.

Building *rapport* which is a prerequisite for any well-conducted qualitative interview between the researcher and its interlocutors is always a difficult thing to establish; however, it is even more difficult with individuals who are vulnerable and considered hard to access, especially during fieldwork to be conducted at an extraordinary time such as a pandemic (van Liempt & Bilger, 2019, p. 320). During the fieldwork, building rapport and establishing trust was indeed challenging for me to do. Initially, some participants seemed to be reluctant and aloof as they were told to share information regarding their personal life, their migration process, and future expectations that might have made them suspicious of me to some degree.

To overcome this major obstacle in ethnographic research, I had to employ some strategies. First of all, I took advantage of the fact that we were able to share the same space simultaneously, observe our gestures and body language reciprocally, and talk to each other without being dependent on any mechanical device and without worrying that privacy and confidentiality had been violated. Based on this advantage, I positioned myself as an interviewee rather than an interviewer and encouraged them to let me introduce myself first and then ask me questions, to which I tried to give honest and transparent answers by at the same time trying to protect my privacy from being violated.

¹ Since the field experiences of the researcher were included following this paragraph, the first-person narrative was preferred rather than the third-person for this section.

After introducing myself as a graduate student who lives in Ankara, I talked about my intentions and then started to tell the story, which made me decide to conduct research on the experiences of highly skilled refugee women. This story, in summary, mentioned a Syrian doctor whom I met in 2019 trying to make a living on a wage less than the minimum wage, telling how she experienced the loss of status and class in Turkey, which felt very unfair to me since the great effort, work, and experience gained for so many years were devalued as a result of events beyond her control. This story sparked off some participants to appreciate my interest in their experience and their willingness to help me with my research.

Another strategy was to exchange pleasantries and engage in small talks, such as the weather or the decoration of the place, which seemed to be a great facilitator for me to lure the participants into the conversation (see Kelly, 2009; p. 188; Sedysheva, 2020, p. 81, for a similar discussion). While doing so and by assessing their body language, I was also able to see the respondent's level of anxiety or comfort and figure out if she was ready for the interview. However, even though this warm-up process facilitated establishing a rapport, which is an indispensable part of qualitative research, with most participants, there were still some participants with understandable concerns who were suspicious of me; I could still sense that they were in a state of distrust towards me although I had given the aim of the research, the rights of the participants to withdraw anytime, and the information about the confidentiality of personal information at the very beginning of the interviews. This can be explained partly by the fatigue of extensive research on refugee populations in Turkey within the last years and partly by the rising xenophobia in society.

However, considering the participants with suspicion and disbelief were mainly Iranians and some Syrians, their reluctance can also be explained by their fear of being followed by their countries' intelligence services. This fear was not felt in Iraqi and Afghan participants, perhaps due to the long-standing authority vacuum in their countries. When I felt they did not feel safe, I tried to eliminate the things that bothered them. For instance, as the tape recorder created some tension and made them uncomfortable, instead of recording the conversations with them, I chose to take notes. Requesting an informed consent form in which participants are supposed to write down their name, contact number, and address, then sign to document to declare that they participate in the study

with their free will was also problematic for me. Therefore, I rather chose to have implied consent which refers to the situation in which participants take their time to answer the questions asked during a lengthy interview (Berg, 2001, p. 56).

Lastly, during the interviews, I focused on emphasizing the similarities we share, not the differences, depending on our identities. I thought that being a researcher, a citizen of the host country who is not sharing the same ethnic background as them, and asking for information from them would not be effective in managing the power relations between the participants and me, in which I was holding an advantageous position. Through identities, I would recognize and negotiate my positionality with the participants (McDowell, 1992, p. 409). Therefore, I wanted to show the participants, who are all highly educated women coming from middle-class families, that I am a highly educated woman, too, coming from a middle-class family with more or less similar experiences. I then asked them to enlighten me on the fact that how being a refugee differentiates their experiences from mine even though we share similar identities. Positioning myself on an equal footing with the participants in power relations not only encouraged them to trust me but also to embrace the research. Thus, we ended up working together in the field where they would call me to add new things they forgot to say during the interview and be a gatekeeper for me in reaching others, and I, on the other hand, would consult them on issues that come to mind later by calling or texting them. Therefore, I ended up to have spoken to the participants several times, both online and face-to-face.

Language usage was also important for me to balance the asymmetric power relations between us. Language is pointed out as a tool through which the dominant exerts symbolic violence on the dominated (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 145-146). Many interviews were conducted in English, which is neither my native language nor theirs, which also puts both of us on an equal footing. Few interviews, on the other hand, were carried out under the facilitation of translators speaking Arabic and Farsi. The importance of the linguistic and cultural context of the expressions used by the interviewees was emphasized during the pre-interviews with the translators. Moreover, during the interviews, I noticed that some participants questioned the existence of the translator at first. In order to prevent this, I emphasized the role of the translator in the study to the participants and underlined the utmost attention given to ethical rules (Akcapar & Çalışan, 2022; p. 13).

Another issue regarding conducting face-to-face in-depth interviews during the pandemic was the risk of getting infected or spreading the virus, which would create a major ethical problem. Although I conducted the interviews during the gradual normalization process, I tried to complete the fieldwork in a way that would not threaten my own health, the health of the participants, and the public health by maintaining physical distance during the interviews, wearing a mask constantly in open or closed places, and using different kinds of disinfectants.

Conducting face-to-face interviews helped me as a researcher be less exposed to secondary trauma and emotional burden. In another research, during the full lockdown, conducting online interviews at any time of the day, depending on the availability of the participants and being ready to work all the time, led to the disruption of work-life balance. At that time, the pandemic-related restrictions and measures prevented researchers from unwinding the stress by leaving the area where we carried out our interviews through which we were constantly exposed to secondary traumas of those having vulnerabilities (Akçapar & Çalışan, 2022). Therefore, we could not draw emotional, spatial, and temporal boundaries between work and life (Till, 2001, p. 46). However, in this study, I was able to interview the participants face-to-face at pre-scheduled times, with a few exceptions. Even the time spent on the way to the next after an interview with one participant contributed a lot to drawing those boundaries again and dealing with the emotional burden on me.

5. CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained as a result of interviews with 36 Syrian, six Afghan, four Iranian, and four Iraqi highly skilled refugee women were analyzed under the following three main topics. These are:

1. Barriers and challenges leading to deskilling
 - What are the factors leading to deskilling, and how do highly skilled refugee women experience it?
 - What kind of patriarchal and neo-liberal social structures lead to deskilling and downward mobility among them?
2. Repercussions of deskilling
 - What are the impacts of deskilling on the women's economic and social integration?
 - How do gender, labor, legal status, and deskilling relate to and intersect while determining the extent to which each woman is exposed to these effects?
3. Strategies developed by the women to combat the impacts of deskilling
 - What strategies have these women developed against the repercussions of deskilling in order to regain their previous achievements in their homeland and better construct and reconstruct their identities and class positions by preserving their habitus and capital?

This section focusing on analytical discussion, also takes up the differences of respondents in terms of their access to labor markets and experience of deskilling among different nationalities and different legal statuses.

5.1. BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES LEADING TO DESKILLING

Council of Higher Education of Turkey (CoHE, 2022a) defines accreditation, recognition, and equivalence in higher education. Accordingly, the first one is described as a review process examining educational programs to detect whether they adhere to certain academic quality standards; the second is associated with the applications for recognition of foreign higher education institutions (HEI) which is determined based on certain criteria including 1) being acknowledged by the competent authorities of the country of origin, 2) getting accreditation from the relevant institutions and 3) being recognized by the CoHE (Council of Higher Education of Turkey, 2022a). The third one, as the most appropriate concept for the context of this study, is expressed as a confirmation process of diplomas (including associate's, bachelor's, and master's) obtained from an HEI abroad (Council of Higher Education of Turkey, 2022a). In the cited source, the criteria required for equivalence are stated as follows:

1. The minimum requirements of the Turkish higher education system shall be met by the certificate awarded by the accredited higher education institution.
2. The necessary prerequisites outlined in the relevant rules shall be met if there is not an equivalent or comparable program in Turkey's higher education system.

According to the diploma equivalence scheme, the applicant, as a first step, must fill up a preliminary application form² via the relevant web page (Council of Higher Education of Turkey, 2022b). Applicants must pay 150 TRY for their diploma equivalency requests and hand-deliver the application documents to the Department of Recognition and Equivalence Services. Then, official correspondence is conducted with the institutions in the country of origin through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to confirm the accuracy of the documents submitted. The application file is assessed in terms of the relevant procedures and principles, and if necessary, an academic opinion is requested

² <http://denklikbasvuru.yok.gov.tr/denklik/yu-denklik-basvuru-form>

from a higher education institution in Turkey. As a result of the assessment of the qualification, the report on the equivalence status of the applicant is submitted to the Recognition and Equivalence Commission. The Commission either issues the equivalence, rejects the application or requests the applicant to take a written/oral/applied exam.

All information required for the equivalence process is provided both in Turkish and English. It was stated in 2015; however, related information was provided online in Turkish (Sert, 2016, p. 109). Some required documents are an original transcript, diploma supplement, transfer transcript, consent form, and copy of ID or passport (Council of Higher Education, 2022c). As mentioned during the interviews and stated by other studies (Sert, 2016, p. 109), many of these documents might be easy to provide by economically-motivated migrants; however, these are hard to be acquired and submitted by refugees.

“We left our country because of the war, obviously. People who did not support the regime had no choice but to flee. I was working for a ministry. There was already a lot of pressure on us because they knew that we were opponents. They confiscated our passports. My diploma had already been taken before. That is why I couldn't bring the required official documents when I came to Turkey, and I cannot apply for equivalence now.” (Syrian, 43, a mechanical engineer currently working for an NGO, Gaziantep)

“I really wanted to continue to my education at master's level. But there is no one left in Syria to bring or send my bachelor's diploma to me. When we came to Turkey, we did not think that we would stay here for a long time. So everything happened so fast. Our exit from Syria... coming to Turkey. In that chaos, when a revolution is taking place in one's country, people are dying, it does not come to mind to think something like that ‘I should get my diploma, and I might need it to get an equivalency in the future.’” (Syrian, 29, having a bachelor's degree in economy, currently working for an NGO, Bursa)

Foreigners living in Turkey, regardless of their status and whether they have a work permit or not, are only allowed to perform certain professions that are not prohibited

from working by law. Accordingly, abided by different laws, professions, and duties legally allocated to Turkish citizens and prohibited to foreigners are listed below (Directorate General of International Labour Force, 2022):

- Dentistry and nursing
- Pharmacy
- Veterinary medicine
- Managing directorship in private hospitals
- Attorneyship
- Notaryship
- Private security
- Exporting fish, oysters, mussels, sponges, pearls, and coral as well as diving, foraging, piloting, captaining, engineering and clerkship within the territorial waters
- Customs consultancy
- Tourist guiding

This also means that refugees with the occupations listed above are not allowed to perform their professions even if they get their diploma equivalenced. To be able to work in these jobs, they need to acquire Turkish citizenship, which is not the case for conditional refugees waiting for resettlement to a third country coming from Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Syrians under temporary protection or having residency permits, on the other hand, can get Turkish citizenship. However, as mentioned in Section 2.4, Syrians are not allowed to apply for it; rather, eligible candidates among them are selected and granted citizenship by the government after the interview and assessment processes are carried out. The ambiguity of this process poses an obstacle for Syrians with the aforementioned professions to apply for equivalency or initiate the legal processes required to practice their profession.

“I was a lawyer when I was in Syria. We had a law firm and lots of cases. But I cannot work as a lawyer here. I have to be a Turkish citizen. It is unclear whether they (governmental officials) would invite us for an interview. Even if they do, getting Turkish citizenship is another process in itself. Some are granted citizenship in a few months; for

some, it takes years. Some get rejected after waiting that long. Let's say I got citizenship; I would need to get equivalence, take placement tests, and register for the Turkish Bars Association. It is unclear whether they would accept me. Let's say everything goes well, and I start working here as a lawyer. I am 44 years old. After this age, I don't have enough motivation to go to this much trouble again. I don't have enough energy for networking here. That's why I decided to run a bakery a couple of years ago. So far, everything is so good.” (Syrian, 44, lawyer, currently runs a bakery, Gaziantep)

Having to speak Turkish both as a social language and as a professional language in order to get equivalence, take a placement or related tests, or perform their job was highly mentioned as one of the biggest challenges for highly skilled refugee women. Language is beyond being neutral or arbitrary; rather, it is a tool through which symbolic violence occurs, and power relations are reflected. In other words, according to Bourdieu, every linguistic utterance consists of an act of power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 145). It is not possible to expect the dominant, as a token of their desire to ensure and enhance equality, to embrace the language of the dominated (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 146). If the dominated ones want to acquire a solid position for themselves in the game field and boost the limited capital they have already had, they have to learn the language of the dominant.

Language seems to deepen the positions of these highly skilled refugee women located in an asymmetrical pile of power relations due to the intersection of their woman and refugee identities. Because, in order to learn a language, one needs to have enough economic and cultural capital. However, as in the case of refugee women, time stands out as an important form of capital that gives advantageous or disadvantageous positions to women in the field. During the interviews, it was understood that women cannot devote as much time as men to learning the language by attending a course or studying on their own. Because not having to be breadwinning but rather being able to attend a course shows that one has enough economic capital to survive and also time to do so. Having a limited economic capital – which is highly likely for refugees who have not been able to bring in enough of it from their countries of origin after forced migration – pushes some women to ghettoize and get stuck in menial jobs due to the long working hours, they

cannot attend to language courses (Man, 2004, p. 142). Whether they work or not, women are also expected to carry out their gendered responsibilities, such as household chores and childcare/elderly care, which slows their learning process of the language of the dominant.

"I have spent my young years to be a successful general surgeon. Here, I have to take the Medical Specialization Exam. In order to be successful in this exam, I need to learn the professional language in Turkish. These are not easy things to do. My brother has taken this exam seven times. In his last attempt, he could finally get the required score. But he is much younger than me. (...) I need to take care of my parents; they are too old. If I go to a language course after work, I cannot take care of them, would not be able to cook or do other things, you know. I do not have time to do it (learn the language)." (Syrian, 46, doctor practicing her profession without a license, Gaziantep)

"While looking for a job, I applied to many schools to work as an English teacher. But they all rejected me because I didn't know Turkish. I didn't think it was necessary to know Turkish as I was going to teach the course in English anyway. Because I needed money at that time, I worked in different jobs. At first, my goal was to work during the day and learn a language in the evening. But in the evening, I was so tired that I did not have time to learn a language. Then I started teaching English to other Iranians through my church acquaintances." (Iranian, 31, with a degree in English literature working as a teacher, İstanbul)

Another issue is related to the fact that learning the language of the dominant, which provides an enormous power in the game field, determines the degree to which agents are able to access information. Neither Turkish nor English is the native language of the participants coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran. Participants who do not know one of these two languages as a second foreign language rely heavily on their social capital, which is made up of their family members, friends, co-nationals, other refugees, and Turkish nationals, to access the information required to get equivalence or to apply for jobs that match their skills and qualifications. As can be seen in the excerpt

below, an Afghan participant with a law degree stated that at first, she could not understand the application processes required to re-register to a university in Turkey because she did not understand the information provided in Turkish, but later she could access information about the application processes and conditions with the help of her brother's friend, that is, her social capital.

“I was more or less guessing that my law degree would not be recognized in Turkey because this is actually a common practice happening in many countries. After making sure that I couldn't work as a lawyer, I decided to get another bachelor's diploma from Turkey, here again. However, I had no idea about which procedures to be followed and gone through by foreign students. Since many web pages were in Turkish and there were few in English, which did not provide adequate information, I could not understand what was written. (...) Anyway, I talked to my brother's friend. He is Turkish, and he helped me out a lot throughout the whole application process. (...) I prepared for the exam for two years and learned Turkish. However, after taking the exam, I didn't want to enroll in law again in case we go to another country in the future. That's why I'm studying psychology now.” (Afghan, 28, with a degree in law, studying psychology, İstanbul)

The other barrier is related to the priority given to highly skilled men, rather than highly skilled women, by their families who spend the limited economic capital to cover the vocational and language education expenses required for men to pass the placement test for getting an equivalency. Because based on the gendered roles of women in society as mother, wife, and daughter, they are not expected to support their family income; rather are seen as those who would be looked after by their spouses. On the other hand, men are certainly expected to be responsible for the livelihood of the family. Therefore, it is believed that the recognition of a man's diploma would provide more employment opportunities and more financial support to the family than that of a woman's. In the absence of support from social capital, such as a family member who could take care of children, and economic capital, such as hiring a nanny which would be used to decrease the workload of women and give them more freedom, educated refugee women find no other alternative but to give up to be a part of the labor force. As the excerpts below

suggested, regardless of nationality, women tend to give up their desire to be retrained or be employed in a job corresponding to their skills and qualifications.

“When we first came to Turkey, one of my children was two, and the other was five years old. We had neither relatives nor acquaintances here. (...) It was difficult to get a diploma equivalency, we needed to take exams and needed to learn Turkish. These are things that require both time and money, which we had not had enough of at that time. Therefore, I preferred to raise my children and support my husband. (...) Then, after a couple of years during which my husband worked in different jobs, he finally managed to get his diploma approved and started working as an academic at the university.” (Afghan, 45, doctor, unemployed, Ankara)

“I wanted to work, of course. I still do. I have studied for so many years. I studied when my relatives on my father's side pressured my father not to letting me and my sisters go to school. I studied when there was a war in my country. But I do not have a chance to work here. Who is going to look after my children, for instance, if I work? I have no one here.” (Iraq, 34, nurse, unemployed, Ankara)

Another challenge that prevents women from being employed in jobs suitable for their skills and qualifications is identity-based discrimination, which occurs both in job search processes and in their working lives. As discussed earlier in Section 3.1, the ability of refugees to integrate into the labor market is hampered by the institutionalized discrimination as a result of the neoliberal structuring leading to precarization, deskilling, and high unemployment rates, which have already been high for members of the host society, especially during the recent years. Citizenship status plays an important role in the distribution of prestigious jobs in the hierarchically segmented job market (Piore, 1979). As a result, while citizens of the host country have access to prestigious jobs, refugees and especially refugee women, are ghettoized in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs (Man, 2004). Since the neoliberal labor market develops a structural dependence on the cheap labor offered by migrants and refugees, barriers intentionally put up by the governmental and professional agencies serve to the reproduction of existing and

accepted social order (Bauder, 2003; Henderson, Trlin, & Watts, 2013; Trlin, Henderson, & North, 2004).

Another reason why migrants/refugees are seen as cheap and disposable labor and clustered in low-status jobs is the perception regarding their identity. As discussed earlier under section 3.2, Bauman defines migrants and refugees as strangers who are *undecidable* (1998, p.56). In other words, in the mindset of natives, they do not neatly fall into the category of either friend or enemy; they are just strangers suddenly appearing at their doors (Bauman, 1998; 2016). Their ambiguous nature leads to prejudice in public, marking them as useless, unreliable, undecidable, and intolerable. Therefore, the knowledge, experience, skills, and achievements that they have or claim to have are not acknowledged, appreciated, and valued by the cognitive maps of natives. As they are being deskilled, migrants and refugees who are employed in the secondary market are perceived as a threat by natives who do not have the avoidance strategy and freedom of mobility to determine the degree and duration of their encounters with these strangers (Bauman, 2001, pp. 89-91; 2016, p. 5). This perception of threat leads to identity-based discrimination against migrants and refugees in the labor market and hinders the process of ensuring social cohesion.

Moreover, the intersectionality of their identities as women and refugees seems to increase the likelihood of highly skilled refugee women being discriminated against while decreasing their chances of finding a formal job that matches their human capital, which pushes them to be employed in precarious, part-time and low-status jobs in different sectors. The women interviewed, regardless of their nationality, stated that such experiences forced them to quit their job or search for new employment, and therefore they mostly prefer jobs in their ethnic and informal labor market where they are able to work jobs without having to have a good command of Turkish specific to their professions or get their degrees accredited. The fact that they can practice their profession without their license recognized by the Turkish authorities makes it hard to control the job market in order to prevent the formation of abusive outcomes. For example, it would be very difficult to inspect a Syrian doctor who opens up an informal clinic in Turkey whether she has a real diploma or not or her competency level in her profession.

“I think it was about seven years ago; I was interviewing the manager of a private hospital. I gave him all my official documents with their notarized translations. I talked about the surgeries I have done, my published articles, and the awards I have received. After listening to me carefully, he remained silent for a while and turned to me and said, ‘Why should I hire you when there are Turkish doctors? If I advertise a job posting now, I bet I will find better ones than you tomorrow.’ Frankly, it made me very sad to see that all the efforts and struggles that I have made for so many years were erased in one sentence. I would not be so upset if he had told me that I was professionally incompetent, but it made me feel incredibly helpless when he told me that he would not give me a job because of an identity and a destiny I could not choose. (...) Anyhow, since I am a very ambitious person, I managed to get equivalence. Then, I became a citizen. I got rid of toxic people in my life, like my ex-husband. I took Medical Specialization Exam. Thankfully, now I can perform my job.” (Syrian, 38, doctor, currently working as a doctor, İstanbul)

"As I told you before, I am too old and tired to get my diploma approved and to learn Turkish. Therefore, I did not and will not have any intention of accrediting my diploma. (...) There are many Syrians in Gaziantep, as you know, but there are very few translators in hospitals. Having a translator other than the doctor in the examination room might also create ethical problems. Patients who want to be in direct contact with the doctor, especially female patients, are very uncomfortable with the presence of interpreters. Syrians want to be examined by Syrian doctors without the need for a third person. That is why private hospitals are hiring Syrian doctors, as there is a serious demand from Syrians. That is how I got a job. Of course, they checked the accuracy of my documents, but they did not want me to accredit it.” (Syrian, 46, doctor practicing her profession without a license, Gaziantep)

However, the respondents stated that they are also discriminated against in their own ethnic and informal labor markets, and their experiences here are shaped mostly by their gender and ethnicity. While being co-nationals sometimes allows for the formation of solidarity among them in the Turkish labor market against Turks employers and employees, it loses its effect when it comes to the ethnic informal labor market, where Turks are withdrawn from the stage and sub-identities such as being from the same ethnicity and sect gain value. An Iraqi-Kurdish participant explains in the quote below, for instance, that the Iraqi-Turkmen business owner did not hire her because of her Kurdish identity. Discrimination targets not only women's ethnic identities but also their gender. Women who suffered the patriarchal domination in their countries still feel it in their ghettoized neighborhoods and labor markets which prevents them from joining the working force.

“A Turkish friend of mine arranged an interview with this man (the business owner). As I am from Kirkuk, he is from Kirkuk, he (the Turkish friend) thought that he (the business owner) would help me. Anyway, I went to the interview. The man must have understood from my appearance, I guess. He immediately asked me if I was a Kurd. I said yes, I am Kurdish. He said there was no job for Kurds here; then he kicked me out of the shop. You see, there is such a great hatred of Turkmen against us.” (Iraqi, 29, nurse who also currently works as a nurse, İstanbul)

“There are many NGOs established by Syrians in Mersin, you know. I would apply to these NGOs when I was looking for a job. I wanted to make money, and I really wanted to help other Syrians. It would be a great option for me. I went to one NGO for a job interview. As soon as I walked through the door, he pulled his face at me; he was glaring at me and stuff. I was still trying to introduce myself. I was telling him about my education, the language I know, and so on. Then he said to me, ‘what kind of Syrian you are, shame on you, why do not you wear a hijab.’ I did not wear a hijab when I was in Syria, I do not wear it here, and I do not want to wear it in the future. But some peanut-headed men here cannot understand that. (...) The guy did not hire me as a

result. If he had hired me, I would not have agreed to work there anyway.” (Syrian, 30, with a degree in theology, currently working as a student assistant in a primary school and a secondary school for Syrian students, Mersin)

5.2. REPERCUSSIONS OF DESKILLING

As discussed earlier, deskilling has both micro-level – e.g., financial, psychological, and health problems that immigrants and refugees suffer – and macro-level repercussions – e.g., skilled workforce loss and integration problems in countries that are reluctant to utilize the human capital they possess and offer (Siar, 2013, pp. 2-3). Before moving on to mention the repercussions that have been detected according to the findings of this study, a little background should be provided to clarify the experiences of highly skilled refugee women in Turkey.

Many participants stated that, right after their arrival in Turkey, they were in search of someone or something to help them to be integrated into the labor market. Their desire to join business life as a woman did not seem so strange to them and their families, as they had already been involved in a working life before they forcibly migrated to Turkey. Participants defined their motivation to study and work before migration as rebelling against the patriarchal oppressive domination mechanisms in their own society and *surviving* despite this structure. Based on their experience, being visible as a working woman in the public sphere, which they have struggled for, was detected as a great achievement in a society that constructs women only as mothers and wives. The participants’ accounts stated below clearly indicate how women perceive the expectations of womanhood that prevail in their own society, how they resist these expectations, what kind of public attitudes towards women’s employment are in society, and how working women face gender-based discrimination in their workplace.

“There is a prejudice against working women because our society wants to keep women under control, force them to show Islamic behaviors – and working is not one of them – and wants a woman always to be dependent on her man. People keep saying something like a woman should not go to work once she gets married; she should take

care of her family, be a good wife to her husband, and be a mother to her children. Her professional knowledge, or her knowledge of any subject, was not trusted at all. For example, my mother and father were doctors. Sometimes the relatives of a patient would not allow my mother to examine the patient just because she is a woman. In other words, they saw my mother as inadequate and unsuccessful. Similar things were happening while I was working. They (co-workers) would act as if I had gone to work not to work but to kill my time. When I would express my opinion on a subject, they would treat me like I would not know anything. Despite these people, this society, I have never stopped working.” (Iranian, 37, environmental engineer, currently working as a software developer, İstanbul)

“Generally, people around me would not approve of girls getting their education and working. (...) Since there is no gender equality in society, there was no gender equality in business life either. Men and women were not equal in business life, neither in terms of salary nor conditions. For example, a female nurse and a male nurse did not receive the same salary. Male nurses were paid more. There is also the issue of trust. I have noticed that patients and doctors, namely male doctors, have more confidence in male nurses. (...) Generally, girls are brought up for marriage. In other words, she has to have a positive attitude towards marriage, listen to her husband, and give him what he wants. I consider myself a feminist. So my view is a little different. If a girl needs to continue her education in Syria, she must either have her family behind her or she must be strong. Because according to society there, there is very little that a woman can do. It is thought that the greatest thing a woman can do is to be a wife, to meet her husband's wishes, and to listen to his word. For example, child marriage is very common in our society. Society always puts pressure on them and says that if you do not get married, you will not be a good woman useful to society. Therefore, many women dropped out of school. Being a successful and

working woman means being a woman who rebels against this society.”
(Syrian, 31, nurse, currently working as a journalist, Gaziantep)

“Their religion is not my religion. I never wanted to live under their regime. I was never the woman they wanted me to be. I was supposed to wear long dresses. I had to wear hijabs every time I would go out. I graduated from university; I completed my master's. But when I was at work, they (bosses and colleagues) made me feel like they did not care about any of those. If a male employee makes a mistake, it's fine, not a big deal, but if a female does, it's a big problem. Huge! They would insult her and humiliate her. Not everyone is like that, of course. But those who think like me are the ones trying to escape from Iran like me.” (Iranian, 32 with an accounting degree, unemployed, İstanbul)

However, their motivations to work after arrival in Turkey were quite different from those of working in their country – at least initially. Due to the nature of forced migration, unlike economic migrants, some of the participants, who belonged mostly to the upper- and middle-class in their countries of origin and therefore have had considerable economic capital, could not find enough time and proper conditions to convert their real property into cash; instead, they were able to bring their movable properties such as cash or jewelry. For this reason, the participants, who are aware that economic capital may run out, started to search and work in jobs, which is termed as *survival employment* in the literature, regardless of whether jobs being temporary, low paid, or unrelated to their own prior training in order to make their limited economic resources sustainable (Creese & Wiebe, 2009). This tendency can be interpreted as a reflection showing that their struggle in the game field they just entered has started all over again. In this sense, they aimed to employ strategies that are likely to enable them to find a solid position in the labor market by preserving and, if at all possible, increasing their existing capital. The respondents usually compared their way of living back in Syria and the harsh conditions they found in Turkey, as shown in the excerpt below:

“In 2012, we came to Turkey with a few pieces of clothing and a small amount of money. We thought we would stay here temporarily, for a few months. As the days passed, the course and intensity of the war

changed. Therefore, our stay here began to take longer than I had anticipated, and the money we had, began to run out quickly. When we were in Syria, we had a big beautiful house and two latest models of cars. When the money ran out, we started looking for a job. I had faith that we would find a suitable job for us. Since I am an engineer, I have gained a lot of experience in projects I have worked on before, and I have a good degree in English; I thought I could find an appropriate job for me. But no one paid any attention to these qualifications in job interviews. As time went on, I realized that I no longer had the chance to choose the job I would work for, considering rent, expenses, and the needs of the children. I had to do any job I found. At first, I got a job in a restaurant. I started working as a dishwasher in a restaurant, and my husband, who is an engineer as well, was working in a bakery.” (Syrian, 52, mechanical engineer, currently working for an NGO, Gaziantep)

“Right after we came here, my husband, children, and I all worked in whatever job we could get because we had very little money. At first, I worked in a pastry shop. I worked in manufacturing for a while. It was a very hard and tiring job. I got very low pay. Then I started going to taking care of bedridden patients at home or making an injection. Now I am working as an Arabic teacher in an association.” (Iraqi, 47, nurse, currently working as an Arabic teacher, Ankara)

According to Bourdieu, capitals (economic, social, cultural) represent the agent's trump cards whose value varies depending on the course of a game and the strategies employed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992b, p. 98). As can be seen in the example of highly skilled refugee women's search for survival employment, economic capital initially acted like an ace and gave them the opportunity of being positioned in the field as well as making new moves using other cards. Based on the accounts of some participants, however, social capital emerged as a valuable trump card since they mobilize their social networks in order to find a job.

“A friend of mine from the university called me when she found out that I was working in a textile factory. She told me that ‘you are not a woman to work as a worker in a textile factory. You have education; you have experience. Use them for your country, don't waste it.’ Then she directed me to her journalist friends. They were making news about the actual situation in Syria. The journalists there told me that the regime showed the situation in Syria through their own lenses for propaganda that would justify their own crimes and interventions, and therefore they were constantly making fake news. To prevent the spread of this news, these journalists in Turkey have been trying to show the world, ‘well, actually, this is not the case; here is what is really happening in Syria.’ Then my husband and I both decided to work as journalists. We have been working for seven years. Since I am a Turkish citizen, I do not need to apply for a work permit. (...) I wanted to do this job because I had to work, that is, for financial reasons, but over time, my interest in this field has increased as well. I would like to continue to conduct research and make news, particularly in the field of gender. My friends here also encouraged me to pursue my education on a master's degree, and they introduced me to some Syrian and Turkish academics they know. I now want to do a master's degree in either International Relations or Public Administration. I want to explore the problems and experiences of women in both Syria and Turkey from a political, social, and health perspective.” (Syrian, 33 with a bachelor's degree in conservatory, currently working as a journalist, İstanbul)

“My biggest support here, rather than my husband, is my friends at the church. Thanks to them, I first started working as a translator. Then we decided to make a website for our church. So I started working as a software developer. I am also an admin of our social media accounts, so I am responsible for managing them. My friends' support is not limited to finding a job for me. Also, thanks to them, I found a rented house suitable for our budget. Thanks to them, I feel safe here. During my out-of-work time, I do everything as a volunteer at the church. I

help newly arrived Iranians find jobs. If I am not able to solve their problems, I introduce them to other friends who are able to do so.”

(Iranian, 37, environmental engineer, currently working as a software developer, İstanbul)

Once being channeled into low-paid and low-status jobs and getting accustomed to the rules of the game, the women wanted to mobilize their institutionalized cultural capital in order to get better and more prestigious positions that they had already had in their countries of origin – in a different game field where they were the dominants, rather than the dominated. At this point, it was detected that they started to face symbolic violence, as a type of non-coercive violence that is exerted upon an agent with their complicity through accepting power, knowledge, habit, and sentiment of the dominant (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a, pp. 167-168). Failure of the country of destination to acknowledge their prior learning outcomes through the barriers and challenges mentioned in the previous section (see Section 5.1) seems to be a way of exercising symbolic violence in order to reproduce the well publicly accepted structures of domination by erasing their claim that they are educated professional, as similarly discussed in other studies, as well (Bauder, 2003; Creese & Wiebe, 2009; Henderson, Trlin, & Watts, 2013; Man, 2004; Trlin, Henderson, & North, 2004).

The abovementioned phenomenon is detected as the devaluation of institutionalized cultural capital, which, surely beyond doubt, stands out as the major repercussion of deskilling. This repercussion hinders the ability of social agents, in this case, the highly skilled refugee women, to mobilize their cultural capital and transform it into other types of capital. The accounts of the women demonstrate that mentioned outcome makes them experience downward mobility, which eventually leads to psychological problems such as life dissatisfaction and depression, self-isolation from socio-economic integration processes, and having a desire to immigrate to a third country through engaging in transnational social networks. The following excerpt from a participant who came to Turkey with his husband and whose family staying in Damascus stopped contacting her as she migrated to Turkey provides a good illustration regarding the issue:

“Since my father engaged in trade, I was from a wealthy family. Our home, for example, was one of the most beautiful houses in Damascus. It has a big garden with jasmine trees. I do not recall any memory in which we had a shortage of money. We would not live paycheck to paycheck, you know, never think of how to make ends meet. I would spend my salary only for my own needs. I would buy myself perfume; I would buy clothes. I would go to the hairdresser. It was a lifestyle that I was used to, you know? Here, all of this seems too luxurious to me. I have no one here, no friends, no family. I cannot work. With what my husband earns, only rent and expenses are covered. We have four children, which means an enormous cost. We live in a small apartment. Most of the time, I feel being stuck here. Sometimes I feel like I cannot breathe. Sometimes I want to go, but I have no place to go. Plus, I cannot leave my children.” (Syrian, 31 with an English literature degree, unemployed, Mersin)

Almost all of the participants exhibited a desire to preserve their upper- and middle-class habits and customs that they are familiar with and to reconstruct their identities in Turkey. By doing so, they believed that they were likely to create a continuity between their pre- and post-migration lives and reach a *good and normal life* in their imagination. The participants, who have economic capital in the form of real property such as houses and cars, social capital consisting of those having similar habitus, and cultural capital which was acknowledged and respected in their homeland, have constantly repeated that they want to re-accumulate these capitals in the host country, rebuild their social identities and return to their old lifestyle, customs, and habits.

“A normal life... Like as many Syrians, many families... For myself, I want normal things. I want to continue to my job. I want to travel as I wish. I want to do whatever I want. I like the city. I like the people here. I am happy to be here. But something is missing. I do not know how to explain it. It is like I am not the old me anymore. I miss my life before I migrated. A lot... There is a more free and beautiful atmosphere here for a woman. It makes me happy to see women here who dress as they want, dye their hair the color they want, and do as they please. But in

Syria, there was a different kind of freedom. Really cannot express my feelings, but I was feeling strong there, feeling like I had some kind of power. We had houses and cars. We had people around who knew us, whom we knew. The ones that we grew up together... Drinking coffee while listening Fairuz or Umm Kulthum on the radio in the morning may not mean anything to the Turks here, but it means a lot to me, to us. (...). Well, no, I do not want to go back. Because I know that if I go there, I will not find what I am looking for. I really hope that I can feel the same feelings again here. Really hope to make here my home.”
(Syrian, 30, with an early childhood education degree, unemployed, Gaziantep)

The participants were, however, well aware of the power of institutionalized cultural capital, which also implies a social and political meaning. Being constructed as ambiguous aliens who are unreliable and useless in a social context brings with it negative social practices such as stereotypes, discrimination, xenophobia, and racism targeting these people (Bauman, 1998, pp. 14,56). The participants stated that they want to stand out against these negative perceptions and practices picturing them as dependents, riotous, and those depleting the public purse by receiving in-kind and in-cash assistance that frames their social position stemming from their refugee status. Rather, after repositioning themselves in a prestigious profession, they aim to change these misperceptions and practices by portraying themselves as strong and independent refugee women who show their potential to contribute to the country if given the opportunity.

“I want to feel respected. I want to feel our Afghans respected, too. We are grateful to the Turkish state, but we are not responsible for bad. I feel very sad when I see news portraying Afghans as abusers, rapists, and thieves on TV or social media. Of course, there are bad people among Afghans; they are in every nation. But Afghans are generally hardworking, quiet, calm, and docile. We do not want quarrels wherever we go because we have always suffered persecution, because we have fled from persecution. I actually want this bad image to be disappeared. That is why I work in a non-governmental organization. After completing my undergraduate education here, maybe then I will

get a work permit; I want to work more strongly.” (Afghan, 27, with an early childhood education degree, bachelor's student, working informally in an NGO)

The other repercussion, on the other hand, emerges in the absence of adequate capital, as stated in section 5.1, which gives rise to the confinement of women in the private sphere where they are expected to undertake the gendered burdens such as housework, child care, and elderly care. Before the forced migration, despite the existence of authoritarian regimes, protracted conflicts and wars, radical terrorist organizations, and oppressive patriarchal culture, these women had fiercely struggled to be visible in the public sphere of their countries of origin by resisting and rejecting all interrelated and intersected mechanisms of domination. However, the fact that deskilling takes place in the country of destination prevents them from utilizing their capital, and hard-won achievements push them back to the private sphere again. Here is what one of the participants described as giving away her economic independence despite feeling secure because of her new religious identity:

"I was working as a teacher in Iran. Life was hard, and it was getting harder and harder because we converted to Christianity, but I was not dependent on anyone financially. Now only my husband works (They divorced first and then decided to live together.). We have two children; one of them was diagnosed with ataxia telangiectasia. (...) Other than going to church during the day, I stay at home and keep myself busy with kids and housework. I really wish I could work." (Iranian, 42, with a degree in English literature, unemployed, İstanbul)

Literature on integration claims that highly-skilled refugees, unlike their unskilled counterparts, would enjoy a smooth transition into the host society and the labor market (Huber, et al., 2010, p. 20; Scheibelhofer & Täubig, 2019, p. 1; Akcapar & Şimşek, 2018, p. 184). Similarly, as suggested by Akcapar and Şimşek (2018, pp. 180-181), in Turkey, citizenship is given to skilled migrants because the country wants to keep skilled migrants/refugees not only because they are beneficial for the economy and development but also they can work towards the integration of the unskilled ones. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that there is a strong positive correlation between the education level

of women and the socio-economic welfare of the countries (Dollar & Gati, 1999; Levine, et al., 2008; Nussbaum, 2011; Schultz, 2002). Against this background, highly-skilled refugee women appear to be key agents for both social cohesion and economic development. However, devalued institutionalized cultural capital as a result of deskilling hinders their enormous capacity to transform both their ethnic communities and host countries for the better. One of the respondents underlined that she wanted to use her human capital for Turkey but found it hard to do so due to red tape.

"I worked as a senior manager in Syria for 15 years. I graduated from the best schools. I invested in myself. There is no need for anyone to allocate an extra budget for me. Just remove the bureaucratic obstacles. Turkey has become a new home for me. I want to contribute to this country in some way with my own knowledge and skills."
(Syrian, 46, mechanical engineer, unemployed, Gaziantep)

5.3. STRATEGIES DEVELOPED BY THE WOMEN TO COMBAT THE IMPACTS OF DESKILLING

Identifying the negative outcomes of deskilling on women also necessitates examining what kind of strategies these women, as active agents who are challenging and transforming all kinds of structures of patriarchal domination, have developed over the years. Establishing, involving, and volunteering for NGOs, engaging in transnational activities, pursuing Turkish education, and seeking a new way, such as irregular migration to immigrate to a third country, were the main strategies followed by the women. These strategies seem to give them an opportunity to carve out a better position, redeem their human capital, and reposition themselves in the country of destination.

The majority of participants articulated that they either established, have been involved, or have volunteered for an NGO. In addition to being an employment opportunity, even though it is usually unstable and underpaid contract work, this strategy serves as them taking pride in contributing to refugees – mostly less fortunate and less educated women and children – in Turkey and those back in their country of origin by helping them to be empowered and raising awareness about domestic violence and the rights of refugees. In these NGOs, they provide training in various fields as well as

financial and legal support in order to facilitate their economic and social integration processes.

“When I first came here, I had a huge regret of leaving my country, you know, there was a huge void inside of me. I felt like I had done something bad by fleeing there. I felt like I could not support the struggle of those left behind against the regime. Then I thought it was against my nature to sit around doing nothing. If I could not help the Syrians in Syria, I thought I could help the Syrians in Turkey. Therefore, I started volunteering at several NGOs. But I had trouble with these NGOs. I could sense that as the founders and staff of NGOs were mostly men and some of them were extremely conservative, they were uncomfortable with my presence there. I also noticed that the women who came to NGO to ask for help could not tell their problems clearly enough when the men were around. So, I talked to a few friends of mine, and we started to run our own nonprofit organization. Here, we teach Turkish and English to children, teenagers, women, and basically anyone. We teach the children. We cover children's stationery expenses. What else... For example, when a woman comes and says she wants to go to the hospital, we help her, and one of our volunteers who speaks Turkish fluently enough takes her to the hospital. We also cooperate with some Turkish NGOs and provide legal and psychological support to women who have been subjected to domestic violence. We provide training and awareness-raising campaigns on violence. I think this is particularly important. Because many women have normalized violence, they do not tend to see violence as a bad thing. We are telling these women that violence is not normal and therefore they should not be trying to justify it.” (Syrian, 34, with a law degree, NGO worker, Mersin)

"You couldn't see women working (as blue-collar workers) in a factory in Syria. Women are everywhere here. There are many opportunities in Turkey that we could not find in Syria. Here is a much better place for women. (...) Now, we are making the best use of these opportunities

offered to us." (Syrian, 38, civil engineer currently working for an NGO, Bursa)

Another strategy stated was to engage in transnational networks. The concept of transnationalism refers to the experiences, interactions, relations, and transactions of migrants and refugees who engage in multi-stranded activities connecting people and institutions and operating across the borders of nation-states by creating social links (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanch-Szanton, 1995; Levitt, 2001; Vertovec, 1999). According to some studies (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Blanch-Szanton, 1994; Faist, 2000; Kivisto, 2001), strong transnational ties established and developed by migrants and refugees lead to weak integration into countries of origin, while others point out a mutual reinforcement between increasing participation in transnational networks and ensuring integration (Lewitt, DeWind, & Vertovec, 2003; Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002). In the absence of an adequate and comprehensive migration policy, migrants and refugees seem to embark on transnational social fields as a coping strategy. The term transnational social fields is defined as *"combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places"* (Faist, 1998, p. 216). They involve the continuous cross-border movement of people, goods, thoughts, and information and are heavily influenced by migrants' and refugees' economic, social and political transnational activities, letting them arrange their social life (Foner, 1997).

Relying on the remittances, in some cases adding them up to their existing economic capital, that are sent by family members, friends, and acquaintances living abroad, some participants stated that they chose to pursue self-employment and establish a small-scale business. Despite the financially precarious nature of this option, participants stated that it brought them dignity and some level of autonomy while also letting them move beyond survival employment. This strategy is mainly followed by Syrians under temporary protection who are more likely to stay in Turkey in the future than those under international protection, as the excerpt below suggested.

"Initially, they (brothers in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates) were sending money to me, but I also was trying to find a job. No one seemed to care about my diploma, though. The jobs that they offered to me were

kind of low-paid, and the money was very little. I thought I did not deserve to work in such jobs. Then I thought about what to do and what to do and decided to start the business. I had some money, but it was not enough. Then I told my brothers. They sent some money to me. (...) Now I am my own boss. Not always very good financially. Especially in the pandemic, things have decreased. But this is my shop. I'm not asking anyone's permission here. Nobody here makes me work all day and pay a little money. Nobody exploits me. Nobody hates me here.” (Syrian, 48, with a degree in business administration, bakery owner, Mersin)

The remittance flows coming to Afghan, Iranian and Iraqi participants, however, were stated to be used to better their livelihoods. The excerpts below reflect how these participants relied on these remittances, especially both during the pandemic and when they were unemployed:

“My husband’s brother has been very supportive of us during the pandemic. They live in Canada. Sometimes he sends \$200, sometimes \$250. We pay our rent or pay the bills. We spend my spouse's salary on other expenses.” (Afghan, 30, with a degree in conservatory, unemployed, Istanbul)

“My husband was working (before the pandemic). He was laid off for a period during the pandemic. An Iranian living in Australia reached us through the church at that time. He sent us money three times.” (Iranian, 42, with a degree in English literature, unemployed, Istanbul)

Moreover, a few of the participants articulated that they collect these remittances and transfer the money to the less fortunate ones living in Turkey to ease their economic problems and those back home to empower them through humanitarian organizations. The first excerpt below explains how an NGO collects and mobilizes these remittances to those in need during the pandemic, while the second one clearly explicates how the care and needs of elderly people in need of help in Syria are met through this way:

“We have been trying to support the people as an association during the pandemic period. Many people have been unemployed; they keep

coming to us. (...) We have provided hygiene kits including masks, disinfectants, and stuff. (...) There are those who cannot pay their bills. We are posting this in the group. To see if anyone wants to pay their bills. Those who live in Turkey and are in a good financial condition sometimes pay, but due to the exchange rate difference, those abroad help more.” (Syrian, 35, with a degree in business administration, currently works in an NGO, İstanbul)

“On social media platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook, we actually collect donations. For example, we post that these people will be helped, and we give their bank accounts. Those who can send money. (...) Of course, there are also those who want to help from abroad. From Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands. (...) Currently, there is a serious elderly population in Syria. Many old people did not leave the country because they were saying that “I would not leave my hometown, I would like to die here,” and stuff. Of course, these people need to be taken care of. For example, we hire caregivers for the elderly there. We pay the salaries of the caregivers. They are also our mother and father. For many people, leaving their parents there is very difficult, very painful. We cannot simply leave behind. This is how we try to support the elderly there. (...) Or some might need a medical product or medication. This kind of thing is incredibly expensive in Syria now. We sometimes buy this stuff and send it there, or we send the money they need.” (Syrian, 32, with a degree in graphic design, currently works in an NGO, Gaziantep)

Referring to non-financial capital, including ideas, practices, and networks that migrants and refugee have in order to use it to influence their interactions and integrate into host societies (Faist, 2008, pp. 34-35), social remittances seems to be employed and benefitted from the participants. Especially those engaging in NGOs stated that they get contacted with mostly their co-nationals living in other countries who also engage in NGOs there in order to get support on how to receive grants for their projects, to make advocacy, and give/receive legal support. With the projects granted, few participants stated they provide vocational courses and help the beneficiaries to establish small

businesses such as cafes, restaurants, and hairdressers, through which they hoped to achieve better economic and social integration and develop the intercultural dialogue between refugees and locals.

“Actually, I did not know much about writing a project. It seemed a very difficult thing to do to me. Neither my friends here (in this NGO) nor I know how to get a grant. We did not know how to write the project, which institutions gave grants, or how to collect the documents required. Then I asked my friends from university who live in Germany and are advocating there. First, we talked about how they can support our association. Then they decided to give us training and arranged a couple of online workshops. It was so important for us. But we also thought that why other associations should not benefit from this training like we do. Then I talked to other associations founded by women here. I brought them together. It was good and productive training for us. We applied to many grant programs. We received a grant from the Dutch Embassy last year. I still get in contact with my friends here and ask their opinion when we have something to ask.” (Syrian, 30, with a degree in graphic design, currently working in an NGO, Mersin)

A few of the participants also articulated their engagement in transnational political activities as they closely followed developments regarding political turmoil and human-rights violation reported in their country of origin. They enhance their networks through online discussions and social media platforms to develop political remittances in order to protest these developments and to fund-raise money for legal consultancy and for supporting the victims back there. The participants admitted that they also involve in political activism targeting their co-nationals living in Turkey through organizing online and face-to-face national/international meetings where they sometimes get contacted with the governors, mayors, and opinion leaders of the provinces they live in and make certain demands on ensuring social cohesion. Through their political activism in their homeland and hostland, these women seemed to reposition themselves socially and politically.

“Of course, I follow the news in Iran closely. Not only because my family or friends are still there, but also because it is my country. I am

Iranian and will always be, even though my country suffers from a bunch of stupid men. (...) There is a human rights organization that I am not officially registered with, but that I follow regularly and sometimes participate in its activities. There are people in Iran who are sentenced to death, especially because they belong to the LGBTI+ community, are women or Kurds, or because of any other reason, that seems deviant to the regime. We organize campaigns for the protection of these people and for the abolition of the death penalty. We do not organize these just for those in Iran. Also, last year, as you may know, Turkey wanted to deport six women in Denizli. If these women went to Iran, they would be executed. Certainly. So we opposed this decision. We held meetings here. We brought the lawyers together.” (Iranian, 31, with a degree in English literature, currently working as a teacher, İstanbul)

“One day in Syria, I believe that the regime will change inşallah and that cruel murderer will be punished. I will do whatever I can for this to happen. (...) There is a huge network of Syrian journalists here, including myself. Here, we are constantly in consultation, thinking, and discussing how we can show the real situation in Syria. People think that the war in Syria is over now. No, the war in Syria, the evil is not over. But al-Assad does not allow evil there to appear. So like his father. He still makes people suffer. He tortures them. We are trying to make everyone, both in Turkey and the world, see him for what he really is. There the revolution is still going on. Here we are trying to support the revolution.” (Syrian, 30 with a degree in finance, currently working as a journalist, İstanbul)

The other strategy stated was to pursue another degree in the Turkish universities. Inability to have their degrees recognized in Turkey, which creates some difficulty in accessing good jobs and also class dislocation, has some participants adopted this strategy by gaining institutionalized cultural capital through attaining more formal higher education within Turkey. There were three participants currently getting a university education at the time of the interviews. However, six participants, all of whom are

Syrians, stated that they had a university degree and a diploma from Turkey after successfully completing their education. According to these participants, as one example shown in the below, their education in Turkey has indeed facilitated their job searching process and improved opportunities in the job market as employer seems to give more value to the “*Turkish experience*” – by resonating with the term “*Canadian experience*,” which reflects the reluctance to acknowledge migrants’ skills and expertise acquired outside of Canada (Creese & Wiebe, 2009; Man, 2004). However, one might question here whether these employers would still value the Turkish experience more if the education of these women had been obtained from countries in the West rather than countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, or Afghanistan.

“The job search process was very difficult for me. A few places asked me for the equivalence of my diploma. I applied for the equivalency, which took a very long time apply. Then they rejected me. I honestly do not know why they rejected my application. According to what they said, my department (Islamic finance) has no equivalent in Turkey. But, I think that doesn't change the fact that I was educated. I mean, I think this is very unfair. Since I could not get an equivalency, I actually decided to study at university again. Because now, Turkey has become our home. I thought I should be able to work here. Then I enrolled in the department of economics at Uludağ University and managed to graduate. (...) Regarding the benefits of a Turkish diploma, I would say, well before, when I would go to an interview with my old diploma, they would not even consider me as a candidate. With my Turkish diploma, however, I would be invited to interviews, and I would really sense that they consider me and assess my skills; I would feel like employers appreciated me. Thanks to my diploma, I think I got my current job. And also, I believe that getting a Turkish education had me granted Turkish citizenship. Before I became a Turkish citizen, I was able to work formally, thanks to my diploma. It allowed me to get a work permit. Now, I do not need to apply for it anymore.” (Syrian, 29, having a bachelor’s degree in economy, currently working for an NGO, Bursa)

One other strategy usually taken by Iranians is conversion to Christianity. It was previously discussed that Iranians employed conversion from Islam to Christianity as a migration strategy and sociocultural integration tool as they recreate their social networks and increase the chances of resettlement by attending religious activities in churches where they are able to gather information, get assistance if and when they need, meet people from their own country who share the same language and cultural roots (Akcapar, 2006, p. 819; 2007, pp. 89-93; 2010, pp. 179-181). The Iranian participants of this study also highlighted this aspect of conversion, namely, the fact that the church enables them to create a social network that functions as a support mechanism in this new country, and to access economic, social, and psychological assistance through this social network, as can be seen in the first excerpt below. Based on the second excerpt, however, it can be said that in some cases, the church they belong to also enables them to find a sponsor to facilitate their resettlement to other countries whom refugees have never met or seen before, as similarly discussed by Akcapar (2006, p. 833).

“I became a Christian because God wanted it. I asked Allah for help every time I would read the Quran. But at that time, God did not help me. My life started to get better after I became a Christian. Everyone was very nice to me when I started going to church. I felt that I needed them very much. They helped me find a house; they helped me find a job. Everyone here is very helpful. I feel safe here. I feel peaceful.”
(Iranian, 37, environmental engineer, currently working as a software developer, Istanbul)

“Well, I have sponsors abroad, so I have never asked the people in the church to find me a sponsor, but I know that some Iranian have found sponsors through the church since they were desperate, they were in need of help.” (Iranian, 31, with a degree in English literature working as a teacher, Istanbul)

The final strategy to be mentioned here, which was mostly expressed by Iranian, Iraqis, and Afghans under international protection, was seeking a new alternative, such as irregular migration to migrate to a third country. This strategy stems from the experiences of the participants, which differ based on their migration status according to

Turkey's immigration policy. As discussed in section 2.4, the temporary protection status granted to Syrians provides free access to basic rights and services. In addition, obtaining citizenship and a work permit is easier for Syrians when compared with the other nationals. According to the participants coming from Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the international protection regime offers a more uncertain future than temporary protection, which reduces their sense of belonging and creates constant anxiety among them. This uncertainty causes their future plans to differ based on their legal status. The majority of Syrian women, for instance, want to stay in Turkey because of their religious and cultural affinity, geographical proximity, the fact that they think that women have more rights and freedoms compared to Syria and that they develop a sense of belonging to the country. The Iranian, Iraqi, and Afghan refugees, on the other hand, await resettlement in a third country. However, since it is unclear for those who have not yet been granted conditional refugee status whether their file will be approved and for conditional refugees when they will be resettled to a third country, some participants stated that they are searching for new ways to go to a country in the West – and as irregular migration one way of doing this, they are in talks with human smugglers to end these uncertainties about their future (see the first excerpt below).

Another strategy is a fake marriage, or instrumental marriage, as defined in the literature referring to the strategy for gaining permission to resettlement in a host country (Nohl et al., 2014, p. 135), which the participant in the second quote below said she considers this option. Therefore, unlike Syrians, these participants do not show any intention to have their credentials approved in Turkey. Neither do they want to gain some Turkish experience in order to increase their employment opportunities.

“I want to go to either America or somewhere in Europe, but frankly, not for myself. For my children's future. Since we are refugees here, we do not have access to the living conditions we want. Everything here is limited to us. We are always waiting for the phone call. So I personally want to belong somewhere. But that seems impossible here. If I take root in Turkey, they will uproot those roots again with one phone call. (...) My eldest son went to Germany through Bulgaria before the pandemic started. Now in Germany. Yes, through smugglers. He now works there. He is trying to take us with him. We heard that the

crossings are dangerous because there is now a pandemic and border incidents in Edirne (referring to the time when Turkey kept its border open for refugees to go to Europe and afterward). But if the smuggler finds a place, we will go to Germany. (Afghan, 41, doctor, unemployed, İstanbul)

“Starting a new life in a new country seems so challenging to me, but I really want to work a regular job. I want to have a regular life. I want to have a routine. I cannot save here to secure my future, you know. I cannot buy a house, for instance. It is unclear when a third country will admit me. I love Turkey very much, but you always need permission to do anything here. If you go to the hospital, you need to have your insurance opened. Otherwise, you have to pay a lot of money. You cannot go to another city. I have no freedom of movement. Turkey is much better than Iran. Of course, I cannot even compare the two countries. Turkey is far ahead in many ways, in all ways, actually. If I were not a refugee, I would want to stay here. In other words, they could definitely resettle me in Turkey as a third country. I just do not want to be a refugee anymore. (...) Fake marriage is an option for me. I have a friend in Sweden who proposed me this. I did not care much at first, but now I am seriously considering it.” (Iranian, 32, with an accounting degree, unemployed, İstanbul)

6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The prerequisite of ensuring social cohesion is undoubtedly to have a fair, strong, and harmonious labor market with low unemployment rates where people, regardless of their status, are able to be employed in jobs corresponding to the human capital that they possess. This eventually increases the daily encounters of different ethnic and social groups with each other. In other words, as one of the markers of integration, social relations between ‘natives and strangers’ can be strengthened at work. However, the presence of discriminatory practices and policies serving to the formation of deskilling hinders the positive contribution of refugees with higher skills and qualifications to the national labor market and society even though they are the ones who are pointed out as those who can be easily integrated into the society and have the power and capacity to facilitate integration processes of their co-nationals.

Deskilling stands out as a major barrier to labor market integration of highly skilled refugee women who suffer from the devaluation of their cultural capital, loss of economic and social capital, and downward occupational mobility. The findings demonstrated that the vast majority of the participants were forced to switch their careers in order to survive and somehow gain a position in their new home country. It was stated that barriers and challenges showing the destination country’s failure to recognize their human capital include legal restrictions, heavy bureaucratic requirements, lack of knowledge, a language disadvantage, the priority given to highly educated men rather than highly educated women, and identity-based discrimination.

These barriers and challenges exclude them from the upper segments of the labor market with highly skilled and prestigious positions. By leading to occupational downward mobility, class dislocation, and loss of economic, social, and cultural capital, some highly skilled refugee women were confined back to the private sphere after many years of struggling to be visible in their country despite all the oppressive domination mechanisms of patriarchy. It is also detected that making their institutionalized cultural capital devalued, preventing their involvement in the job market, and confinement of women into the private sphere again hinders highly-skilled refugee women's capacity to contribute to social cohesion and economic development and to transform both their ethnic communities and host countries for the better.

Devaluation of the institutionalized cultural capital of the highly skilled refugee women was associated with the perception regarding their identity. Based on Bauman's conceptualization of strangers, the highly skilled refugee women were pointed out as the strangers of this study whose knowledge, experience, skills, and achievements have not been recognized and acknowledged because these are marked as useless and unreliable in the cognitive maps of the natives who cannot identify strangers as either their friends or enemies (Bauman, 1998; 2001; 2016). However, this study illustrated women as active agents rather than passive recipients who silently accept the effects of deskilling, which is one of the consequences of being seen as strangers. These women seemed to enter Bourdieu's game field where they compete with the dominants who determine the rules of the game and to what extent new players will be able to use their capital. The women's involvement in this game required them to mobilize the capital that they possessed in order to get new capital, carve out a better position, redeem their human capital, and reposition themselves.

Mobilization of their capital in the field has helped them develop some strategies in order to reach their desire to be able to do their own profession, to have their educational and professional experience not to be overlooked, and to attain the life style that they were accustomed. These strategies identified in this study are establishing, involving, and volunteering for NGOs, engaging in transnational activities, pursuing Turkish education, involving a religious community, seeking a new way, such as irregular migration to immigrate to a third country, and fake marriage. Through these strategies, they reclaim their high status and prestige and reconstruct their identity and habitus.

While doing so, it was seen that different variables were at play; in other words, their experiences and strategies were complicated by the intersectionality of nationality, ethnicity, legal status, citizenship, and city of residence in the neo-liberal order. For example, sharing the same national identity often gave participants an advantage in entering the ethnic informal job market, establishing and involving an NGO, and engaging in transnational ties and advocacy. As the Syrians are the largest refugee group in Turkey, their social solidarity ties on the basis of Syrianness were detected as higher than Afghans, Iraqis, and Iranians. However, when ethnic boundaries are drawn between people, regardless of whether they are from the same nationality, it may pose some disadvantages. For example, the identity of being Iraqi was not sufficient for an Iraqi Kurdish woman to be recruited by an Iraqi Turkmen business owner in an ethnic labor market. It was observed that the Kurdish ethnicity sometimes negatively affected the experiences of participants from both Syria and Iraq in Turkey when compared to other ethnic groups from these countries. There was, however, no differentiation detected between the experiences of Afghan and Iranian participants based on ethnic identity.

Because of the difference between temporary protection and international protection status, it was explained that the daily lives and futures of Afghans, Iraqis, and Iranians are full of uncertainties which increases their willingness to be resettled in a third country through searching for new ways, including fake marriage and irregular migration. Compared to these groups, Syrians, who are more advantageous in terms of the rights granted by legal status, considered themselves permanent in Turkey; for this reason, they developed strategies such as pursuing Turkish education in order to increase their class position and, accordingly, to gain class privileges. The citizenship status, which is not possible for other groups under international protection, seemed to facilitate the entry of Syrians into business life. Once a Turkish naturalized citizen, there are no longer the constraints of having to get a work permit and having to worry about any quota in a business venture.

In some cases, it was seen that the city of residence also had an impact on the experiences of the participants. Living in Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Mersin, where refugees are densely populated, appeared to offer opportunities at some points compared to other provinces in terms of the formation of and access to ethnic markets, the more projects

transferred to these regions to ensure social cohesion, and the fact that refugees have more social capital on an ethnic basis.

The participants of this study were all Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian refugee women living in Ankara, Bursa, Gaziantep, Istanbul, and Mersin. Future research might focus on how highly educated refugee men from these countries and living in these provinces experience deskilling and what strategies they develop against the effects of the phenomenon, which eventually would lead to a comprehensive comparison between the experiences of refugee men and women. In addition, another future study would shed light on the literature by comparing the experiences of refugees and economic migrants because highly educated economic migrants are likely to have their documents with them and use their agency to get a job in the host country prior to migration while these are not possible in many cases of forced migration.

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ANNEX

ANNEX 1: QUESTIONS FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

1. Demographic Data

- 1.1. How old are you?
- 1.2. Where were you born?
- 1.3. What is your country of nationality?
 - a. Do you have Turkish citizenship?
 - b. If yes, since when?
 - c. Are you a dual citizen?
- 1.4. What is your ethnic background?
- 1.5. What is your legal status in Turkey? Since when?
- 1.6. How many years have you been living in Turkey?
- 1.7. What is your marital status?
- 1.8. Do you have children? If yes, how many children do you have?
- 1.9. What is the highest level of education you have completed? How many years of formal education have you received? Where?
- 1.10. What is your occupation?
- 1.11. How many years have you worked before arrival in Turkey?
- 1.12. What is your current employment status?

2. Life in the Country of Origin

2.1. Could you please tell me how your life was in your *country* (Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq)?

- a. In which province were you born? Were you living in a rural or urban area?
- b. How many people were typically living in your household? How many siblings do you have?
- c. What was the head of the household's annual income?
- d. What was your parents' level of education?
- e. What were your parents' occupations?
- f. How do you define your family's socioeconomic status and socio-cultural status before migration?
- g. How would you assess your socio-economic situation before migration?

2.2. Could you please tell me about your education life in your *country*?

- a. What are your motivations and aspirations that drive you to study at university?
- b. Why did you want to hold a bachelor's degree?
- c. Why did you choose the department? What were your aspirations?
- d. Is there any person in your family who supports you for pursuing education?
- e. If yes, who and how did he/she support you?

2.3. Could you please tell me about your working life in your *country*?

- a. Were you employed before immigration? What was your salary? How much did you earn back home?
- b. What kind of jobs did you work?
- c. How did you find your previous job?
- d. Did your previous job match your qualification profile?
- e. How was your working environment? How was the gender distribution?
- f. Did you have any problems with employment?
- g. If yes, what kind of problems did you face at your work environment?

2.4. Could you please tell me about the employment and working conditions in your country?

- a. Which sectors were the most popular? What was the most prestigious sector? Were formal jobs or informal jobs more common? Who could mostly work as a civil servant or in the public sector? Who could mostly work in the private sector?
- b. Which sectors did women/men more likely to work in? What kind of employment opportunities were available for women? What kind of challenges did women face?

3. Migration Decision

3.1. When did you arrive in Turkey? Which year?

3.2. How did you make entry into Turkey?

3.3. Have you come alone or with your family?

3.4. Did you have any family members or relatives who were already in Turkey?

Have you had any contacts/relatives/friends in Turkey before arrival?

3.5. For what reasons did you leave your country?

3.6. Why did you decide to migrate?

3.7. Why did you choose Turkey? Was Turkey your first decision? Why did you choose to live in this province?

3.8. What did you know about Turkey? What were your expectations about Turkey? What were your expectations regarding education and employment as a woman in Turkey?

4. Housing and Living Conditions

4.1. How would you assess your living and housing conditions?

4.2. How many people live in your home? Are they all family members?

4.3. How would you assess your socio-economic situation?

4.4. Do you receive any financial assistance to pay your expenses?

4.5. How would you describe the living conditions of the city you live in?

4.6. What are the main challenges?

5. Employment and Working Conditions in Turkey

5.1. What do you currently do in Turkey?

5.2. If you are working, how did you find your current job?

- 5.3. Do you have a work permit? If yes, could you please tell me about your application process?
- 5.4. Have you participated in any trainings/ skills/ qualification programs before finding this job? What institution provided the course?
- 5.5. Do you think that the job you are currently working in matches your qualification profile?
- 5.6. What are the challenges that prevent you from working for a job suitable for your skills and qualifications? Did you get an equivalence certificate? Why/why not?
- 5.7. Could you please tell me about your working conditions?
- 5.8. Are you satisfied with the work you are currently doing? What do you like most about it and the least?
- 5.9. Do you face any problems with employment? If yes, what kind of problems are there?
- 5.10. Have you experienced any discrimination or prejudice regarding your gender and nationality?

6. Social Cohesion

- 6.1. What is your typical day like?
- 6.2. Can you speak Turkish? If yes, how did you learn Turkish? Which level?
- 6.3. What are your opinions about local people?
- a. How would you assess the processes that drive you closer to/farther from the local community?
 - b. What are your similarities or differences with the local community?
 - c. What kind of opinions do you have about the local community?
 - d. How would you assess the co-existence with the local community in Turkey?
- 6.4. How would you assess your communication and interaction with the local community?
- a. Do you live in an x-dominated neighborhood (Syrians, Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians)?
 - b. How would you assess your neighborhood relationships with the local community?

- c. How would you assess your fellowship relationships with the local community?
 - d. How would you assess marrying a Turkish citizen?
 - e. How would you assess your relationship with the local community at work?
- 6.5. Do you feel safe living in Turkey?
- a. Who do you trust most in Turkey?
 - b. How would you assess the government agencies' (incl. local governments) approach to X (Syrians, Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians)? Do you trust government agencies?
 - c. How would you assess the non-governmental organizations' approach to X (Syrians, Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians)? Do you trust non-governmental organizations?
 - d. How would you assess the attitude of the police force to X (Syrians, Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians)?
- 6.6. Who do you think most represents X (Syrians, Afghanis, Iraqis, Iranians) in Turkey? Why?
- 6.7. (If not a Turkish citizen) Would you like to be a Turkish citizen? What kind of advantages do you think Turkish citizenship can bring?
- a. (If a Turkish citizen) Could you tell us about your citizenship process?
 - b. Why did you want to be a Turkish citizen? What advantages did you have after becoming a citizen?
 - c. Have you experienced any disadvantages after becoming a Turkish citizen?
- 6.8. What are your reasons to stay in Turkey? What are your expectations for the future?
- a. What do you plan to do within 12 months?
 - b. Do you wish to stay in Turkey?
 - c. Which country do you want to go? Why do you want to go to this country?
 - d. Under which conditions would you want to stay in Turkey?
- 6.9. Do you help less educated and less fortunate in your community? If yes, how?

6.10. Do you have any suggestions for successful social cohesion? What can be done?



ANNEX 2: ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Karar: 6711

KARAR: 2020/



T.C.
ANKARA SOSYAL BİLİMLER ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ARAŞTIRMALARI
VE
BİLİMSEL YAYIN ETİK KURULU

ETİK ONAY BELGESİ

Araştırma Yöntemi	Mülakat-Veri Kaynakları Taraması
Araştırmanın Adı	Topluumsal Cinsiyet, Vasıfsızlaştırma ve Zorunlu Göç: Türkiye' deki Mülteci Kadınların Deneyimlerine İlişkin Bir Çalışma (Gender, Descilling and Forced Migration: A Study of the Experiences of Refugee Women in Turkey)
Sorumlu Araştırmacının Adı Soyadı	Aysima ÇALIŞAN
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21/09/2020 Bilgisayar İşletmeni

Mehmet DOĞAN

Evrak Doğrulama İçin : <http://ebysbackend.asbu.edu.tr/en/Vision.Sorgula/Belgedogrulama.aspx?V=BE6P38E6H>

Bu belge 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5. Maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.