

Research Article

Syrian Immigrant Nursing Students Difficulties Experienced in the Education Process: Qualitative Study

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Corresponding author:** Melike Yavas Celik, Department of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences, Kilis 7 Aralık University, 79000 Kilis, Turkey**Received:** December 08, 2020; **Accepted:** December 28, 2020; **Published:** January 04, 2021**Abstract*Background:** The number of Syrian immigrant nursing students in Turkey has been increasing. Nursing includes an education that requires practical and good communication with people.**Aim:** It was aimed to reveal the difficulties that Syrian immigrant nursing students experience in the education process.**Design and Methods:** The research was prepared in a qualitative descriptive design. We worked with Syrian immigrant students (2nd, 3rd, 4th grade) who saw the field of nursing practice. The interviews were made via social media due to the Covid-19 pandemic process.**Results:** Two main themes were used in the study; I- Difficulties in Practice and II- Difficulties in Theoretical Education. Under these themes, it has been determined that students have communication problems in the field of application and theory and that they have difficulties in comprehending the related application and theoretical lessons.**Conclusion:** Syrian immigrant nursing students have difficulties in communicating with patients, their relatives and clinical team in the field of practice in nursing education, and in participating in lectures and exams in the theoretical field.**Keywords:** Syrian immigrant students; Communication; Nursing education; Difficulty

Introduction

In recent years, Turkey has become one of the world's most prominent country of destination for regular migration, but more importantly a notable transit and destination country for irregular migrants fleeing the Syrian Crises, including the ongoing civil war that has already killed more than a quarter million people. The number of people who had to flee from Syria has now passed four million and became the world's largest immigrant crisis in twenty-first century [1]. According to data from UNHCR as of January 12, 2017, there are 4,904,021 registered immigrant from Syria of which 2,854,968 (58.2%) are residing in Turkey. Of the immigrant in Turkey 53.2% are male, 44% under the age of 18 (13.7% under the age of five years [2]. According to the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey constitutes 23% of the Syrian population are adolescents. In addition, the ratio of Syrian immigrants between the ages of 20 and 24 to receive high school and university education is 18.2%. This rate is 24.5% for Syrian immigrants between the ages of 25-29 [3,4].

Turkey, according to a study conducted in 2018 by the Higher Education Board, the number of international students Syrian universities located in Turkey is 19 069 [5]. There is a concentration of immigrants in cities near the Syrian border. Kilis is one of these cities [6].

Also, Universities with the highest number of Syrian immigrant students; These are the universities in the cities of Istanbul, Gaziantep, Mersin, Kahramanmaraş, Karabük, Adana, Malatya, Siirt,

Konya, Mardin, Eskişehir, Sakarya, Samsun, Kayseri, Kilis, Uşak and Osmaniye [4,5].

When Kilis province ranked high in hosting Syrian immigrant students, it became necessary to reveal the problems of these students. Cultural differences emerge as a major problem in the education and training process of Syrian immigrant students. Especially having language problems affects the academic success and psychology of these students [7,8]. For this reason, this study aims to reveal the difficulties of Syrian immigrant nursing students in their education process.

Research Questions:

1. What is problem of Syrian migrant students in the Implementation Process?
2. What is problem of Syrian migrant student in the Theoretical Education?

Design and Methods

Population and sample of research

While the population of the study was composed of Syrian immigrant nursing students (n = 36) studying at the nursing department of a university in Kilis province, the sample of these students was volunteering to participate in the study, who could communicate with social media (data could not be collected face-to-face due to the covid-19 pandemic process) and 2. 3rd and 4th grade

students (n = 15). 3 students who did not give sufficient answers to the questions were not included in the study. The study was completed with students who answered all questions regularly (n = 12).

Collection of data

The data were collected by the researchers using an interview form that includes questions about the problems students may experience during the education process and a questionnaire containing demographic data of the students, which was created by considering the literature review and the communication with the students.

Research application

The interview and questionnaire prepared was delivered to the students via social media, and the students were informed about the study and their opinions on the subject were received. The study continued with students who volunteered to participate in the study, answered all questions regularly, and were accessible via social media (n = 12). The students have been given 10 days to answer the questions. The students' answering time is planned to be 20 minutes in order not to be distracted and to get useful answers.

Analyses of research

Descriptive analysis technique was used to analyze the data. Firstly, a frame work was created for data analysis and it was determined under which themes the data will be organized. Then, the data obtained according to the created frame was read, classified and defined.

Ethical consideration

Ethics committee of the study was taken from A University Ethics Committee Commission on 28.04.2020. (Number of meetings 2020/10).Volunteers of the participants were taken as basis. Interviews were made with the participants who agreed to participate at a time available.

Results

Most of the students participating in the study are 21 years old (25%), live in Kilis (33.3%), have 4 or 7 siblings (33.3%), 1st grade student (50%), live in nuclear family (50.0%), income level expenses of less than or balanced (100%), lost a close during the war (75%), happy to be in Turkey (83.3%), respectively (Table 1).

Turkey, the Syrian education for a better opportunity to see the future and thoughts will contribute to reconstruction of Syrian youth Syria, Syrian gives students the best education services [9]. Syrian individuals included in the higher education system in Turkey, the civil war in the event that ended the training they received from the host country in Syria that can be used for the benefit of their countries, the development of the country as qualified persons, will contribute greatly to the development and progression. Most of the students participating in the study are 21 years old (25%), live in Kilis (33.3%), have 4 or 7 siblings (33.3%), 2nd grade student (50%), live in nuclear family (50.0%), their income more or less stable (100%) lost a close during the war (75%) and were to be in Turkey (83.3%), respectively (Table 1). In the TDHS (2018) data, it is stated that Syrian migrants get married at a very early age and have many children, have orphans, and their income is low [4]. In addition, it is reported that the number of Syrian immigrant students is high in Kilis province [5].

Table 1: Distribution of the demographic data of the students participating in the study.

Age	n	%
19	2	17
20	2	17
21	3	25
22	2	17
23	1	8.3
24	2	17
Current province		
Hatay	3	25
Kilis	4	33
Şanlıurfa	2	17
Gaziantep	1	8.3
Diyarbakır	1	8.3
Van	1	8.3
Number of sibling		
4	4	33
7	4	33
6	1	8.3
8	1	8.3
9	1	8.3
10	1	8.3
Current staying		
House (rent)	9	75
House (of their own)	2	17
Container city	1	8.3
Which grade		
2	6	50
3	5	42
4	1	8.3
Family type		
Nuclear family	6	50
Extended family	4	33
Broken family	2	17
Economical situation		
Less than income	6	50
Balanced with income and expenses	6	50
The loss of a relative during the war		
Yes	9	75
No	3	25
Satisfaction situation to be in Turkey		
Satisfied	10	83
Not satisfied	2	17
Total	12	100

Theme: Problems experienced in the implementation process

Sub-Theme: Communication with Patients and Patient Relatives: Syrian migrant students have presented various problems

in communicating with patients in practice areas. 2, 3, 4. Participants stated that Turkish patients do not want to receive nursing services from them. The 5th participant stated that Syrian patients demanded that students meet their special needs (buying food, shopping etc.) due to communication problems.

“Patient relatives have special requests, especially Syrian patients want us to do food services because they cannot communicate and they demand that we shop for them. I try to help as much as we can, but going out of the hospital is not appropriate during the internship, we try to explain this to the relatives of the patients, but they are very insistent” (Participant 5).

Other participants stated that they had difficulties in communicating with patients due to language problems (Table 2). Harunoğulları et al. (2019) when they encounter problems in their study of Syrian students in the educational process in Turkey, most of the participants considered “experienced difficulties in language learning” (40%) were identified [7]. Studies have reported that Syrian immigrant students have difficulties in adapting to Turkish society due to the differences in the education system and cultural differences between the two countries, and they have language problems [10-12].

“Once I was wearing an IV to a Turkish patient, he asked me where you are from, and when he said “Syrian” he started screaming, don’t put the serum on, what are you doing here. I had to leave him and go. My Turkish friend put the patient’s serum on. Why are they treating me like this, as if I was giving him poison? However, I try to do my profession like everyone else” (Participant 2).

“When speaking with patients, it is understood that I do not have a good command of Turkish and the patients understand that I am not Turkish but Syrian. Then they immediately ask me if you are Syrian? When I say yes, their expression is distorted, their faces turn sour... It is as if they do not want me to give them health care. But there are some, well done, mashallah you are reading and saying words that encourage me, then I am not very happy” (Participant 3).

“Sometimes they ask where I am from. When I say I am Syrian, they call me a traitor and question why I am not fighting in my country. Then they won’t let me treat them. We came here with great difficulties, lost our family, lost our home, nobody wants to leave their homeland, but we were forced to come” (Participant 4).

“While communicating with Turkish patients and their relatives, we have language problems, we have difficulty understanding each other. I mostly want help from the interpreters in the hospital to communicate” (Participant 10).

Sub Theme 2: Communication with the team in the clinic you work: Syrian immigrant students have presented various problems in communicating with the team in practice areas. The 1st participant stated that they were introverted and could not be assertive, the 2nd participant Syrian immigrant students were constantly employed instead of Turkish students in the clinics where the 2nd participant Syrian patients were located, the 3rd participant teachers had difficulties in understanding / understanding the practices they told / performed, the 5th participant classmates and nurses called them refugees in the hospital. they called 11, participants passed the wave of other students from what they’re back, and this stops my classmates

Table 2: Themes and Research Results.

I. Theme: Problems Experienced in the Implementation Process
1. Sub-Theme: Communication with Patients and Patient Relatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to communicate due to language problems (n=8) Turkish patients' refusal of Syrian immigrant students from nursing service (n=3) Special demands of Syrian patients (getting food, shopping, etc.) (n=1)
2. Sub-Theme: Communication with the Team in your Clinic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to communicate due to language problems (n=6) Introverted and not being sociable (n=1) Syrian patients are constantly expected to serve them (n=1) Teachers' not understanding the applications they tell / do (n=1) Calling them as refugees by the nurse / students (n=1) Being backward from other students is a matter of waves (n=1) Pressure from racist nurses (n=1)
II. Theme: Problems Experienced in Theoretical Education
1. Sub Theme: Participation in Classes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to attend classes due to language problems (n=7) Inability to actively attend classes (n=1) Boredom in lessons (n=1) Difficulty telling the teacher that you do not understand the subject constantly (n=1) Not being accepted to the homework groups that need to be jointly prepared (n=1)
2. Sub Theme: Difficulties in Exams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to understand questions due to language problems (n=9) Time problem in exams (n=1) Some academicians do not give them additional time (n=1) Exam questions of the main courses are too long (n=1)

12, participants they were persecuted by racist nurses, and nurses in other participants / communicating because of teachers with language problems have expressed their difficulty (Table 2) .

“Nurses always make us work in clinics with Syrian patients. Because we can communicate more easily with Syrian patients. However, we are very tired, Turkish students are sitting too. Let them work in clinics where there are a lot of Turkish patients, so we can sit. This situation disturbs me very much, but when I talk to the nurses, they say that you are Syrian and you will take care of the Syrian patients. I think it is very wrong to differentiate patients” (Participant 2).

“We do not understand the practices told by our teachers in internship, we can understand better if they tell us by writing. Especially, I cannot learn how to prepare the drugs used during treatment and what the drugs do” (Participant 3).

“I don’t like that my classmates or nurses call me a refugee,

especially when they address patients like this in clinics, and I feel upset and sad” (Participant 5).

“Some friends deliberately make fun of us when we can’t do or don’t understand the practices. They don’t like us. However, we do not do it deliberately, we do not understand, that having communication problems does not show that we are not intelligent” (Participant 11).

“There was a racist nurse in one of the clinics in the internship, and somehow he did not accept me, I avoided communicating with him in order to avoid problems. Also, nurses speak very fast, we cannot understand, if they talk a little slowly, we will be able to communicate more easily” (Participant 12).

Syrian students in front of the fuse with Turkish peer one of the major obstacles is the discriminatory and marginalizing view of Turkish families towards refugee children. For example, more than half (56%) of the parents participating in the “Refugee Survey from the Perspective of Society” stated that they did not approve of their children establishing friendships with Syrian children [13]. In a study, researchers determined that immigrant students from Surey were faced with the problem of racism, Turkish students refused to include them in their teams, accused them of leaving their country and not loving their homeland [7]. Altıntaş (2018) also found in his study that Syrian immigrant students had difficulties in communicating with their teachers and participating in classes [14]. Studies and results in our study; It has shown us that Syrian immigrant students are marginalized, social acceptance of Syrian students is low and this situation negatively affects students.

“I am a little timid because I am Syrian. Because I cannot communicate with both my classmates and the doctors and nurses in the clinic, so I am afraid of doing wrong and unfortunately I cannot be very sociable” (Participant 1).

Theme: Problems experienced in theoretical education

Sub Theme: Participation in classes: Participants have various opinions on this issue. While most students (n = 7) stated that having language problems negatively affected their participation in the lessons, the 2nd participant could not attend the lessons actively, the 4th participant was very bored in the lessons, it was difficult to express to the 5th participant teacher that he did not understand constantly, the 7th participant nursing education was difficult, The 10th participant stated that Syrian migrant students were not wanted to be accepted by other students to the groups formed in joint homework assignments (Table 2).

“I cannot actively attend classes due to my language problem, but I always study Turkish, I repeat the lessons I take daily. I’m trying to close my gap with Turkish students” (Participant 2).

“I don’t understand most of the things the teachers tell in the lesson, I get bored sometimes in the lessons, the teachers speak very fast, I cannot focus on the lesson no matter how hard I try to understand what they are telling” (Participant 4).

“Some of our teachers are very understanding, politely ask us if we understand, but it is difficult to say that I do not always understand. Sometimes I say that even if I do not understand, I do, I avoid being embarrassed” (Participant 5).

“Nursing education is very difficult, there are a lot of concepts that we are foreigners to, things get even more difficult when you don’t have a command of Turkish. Occasionally I go to the teachers or talk to some of them on the phone and ask where I am missing, they help them. But it is still very difficult” (Participant 7).

“There are many difficulties in the lessons that we need to prepare jointly with friends, Turkish students do not want to work with us, they do not enroll us in their groups, we try to do something with Syrian students, but we fall short” (Participant 10).

Altıntaş (2018) found in his study that Syrian immigrant students had difficulties in communicating with their teachers and participating in classes [14]. In addition, Candappa (2000) and Goodwin (2002) emphasize that teachers who are suitable for the characteristics and cultures of these students should take part in the education of refugee students [15,16]. Considering the language problem experienced by the students in the study, it can be said that it would be beneficial for Syrian students to continue their education with academics and students who speak their own language and belong to their culture, and in this way, they can achieve better academic success.

Sub Theme: Difficulties in exams: The students mostly (n = 9) stated that they could not understand the questions due to the language problem. In the study of Uzman and Kösten (2016) and Uzun and Bütün (2016), it was determined that the biggest problem Syrian children experience in the process of getting used to school is not knowing the language and, accordingly, having communication and adaptation problems [17,18]. In addition, the 4th participant stated that they had time problems in the exams, the 5th participant stated that some academicians did not allow them extra time in the exams, and the 6th participant stated that the exam questions of the main courses were too long (Table 2).

“Everyone gives out their exam paper and we stay the last, we neither understand what is written nor can we keep up the time” (Participant 4).

“Some of our teachers know us and give us extra time. But some of our teachers say that this is unfair to our other friends and refuse to make positive discrimination. We had a quarrel with the teacher in an exam, I was not finished, I asked for a little more time, but he said that I had no such right and he took the paper from me. I got a low score from that exam. Actually, I think I would pass the exam if it gave more time” (Participant 5).

“The exams for some of the main courses are very difficult. These lessons have many questions and take a long time. Our reading and understanding of the questions is not as fast as Turkish students, we cannot train them, so we get low scores no matter how hard we work” (Participant 6).

In the study, it was stated that some academicians did not give additional time to the students, some academicians gave them additional time and made explanations. In a study, teachers stated that they do not know how to solve the problems of Syrian migrant students and stated that they are alone in finding solutions to these problems [19]. According to the statements of the students in the study; It has been demonstrated that young people have difficulties in understanding the duration and questions during the exams and the differences in academicians’ behavior towards them.

Conclusion

As a result, it has been determined that Syrian immigrant students have difficulties in communicating with patients and their relatives and the team in the application. It has been determined that they have difficulties in attending classes and exams in the theoretical area. In addition, the students stated that they found nursing education difficult, that they were marginalized by Turkish nurses, patients and students, that some of the academicians found their approach negative and that they could not understand the lessons. The biggest problem of the students was determined as having difficulties in Turkish education despite having language education.

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