

Turkey's Humanitarian Aid Through Education Provision of the Syrian Children School-Aged Refugees

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Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan bagaimana pemerintah Turki menjalankan kebijakan penyediaan pendidikan bagi pengungsi usia sekolah Suriah. Turki adalah penerima terbesar dan penyumbang bantuan pengungsi Suriah terbesar kedua, terutama sebagai negara transit dengan banyak pengungsi menuju Eropa melalui Turki sebelum melanjutkan ke negara tujuan mereka. Sebagai tuan rumah pengungsi, jumlah yang cukup besar menuntut Turki untuk membantu dan memfasilitasi mereka untuk mengakses berbagai layanan, seperti layanan sosial, kesehatan, dan terutama pendidikan bagi anak usia sekolah. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui pengumpulan data melalui studi literatur dan analisis data deskriptif. Penelitian menemukan bahwa kebijakan pendidikan Turki telah menunjukkan hasil yang signifikan, membantu para pengungsi Suriah di usia sekolah karena kemudahan akses pendidikan yang dapat diperoleh, termasuk hak dan tunjangan yang setara dengan anak-anak Turki lainnya. Kebijakan yang diberlakukan oleh Turki, seperti pendampingan psikologis bagi anak-anak yang masih mengalami trauma dan penyediaan fasilitas pendidikan sementara atau sekolah negeri Turki, telah berhasil diadopsi.

Kata Kunci: *Kemanusiaan; Pendidikan; Pengungsi; Suriah; Turki*

Abstract

The article explains how the Turkish government carries out a policy of providing education for Syrian school-age refugees. Turkey is the largest recipient and the second largest contributor of Syrian refugee aid, primarily as a transit country with many refugees bound for Europe via Turkey before continuing to their destination countries. As the host of refugees, a significant amount requires Turkey to help and facilitate them to access various services, such as social services, health, and especially education for school-age children. The study uses qualitative methods through data collection in literature studies and descriptive data analysis. The study uses qualitative methods through data collection in literature studies and descriptive data analysis. Research has found that Turkey's education policy has shown significant results, helping Syrian refugees at school age because of the ease of access to education that can be obtained, including rights and benefits equal to other Turkish children. Policies imposed by Turkey, such as psychological assistance for children who are still experiencing trauma and the provision of facilities in temporary education or Turkish public schools, have been successfully adopted.

Keywords: *Education; Humanitarian; Turkey; Refugees; Syrian*

Introduction

Many Syrian refugees in Turkey have been of school age since their first arrival in 2011, so according to Gümüş et al. (2020), the Turkish government sees the importance of providing education to Syrian children. Since then, the Turkish government has effectively drafted laws and developed educational policies to facilitate education for Syrian refugee children. One of them is providing education in Arabic by following and adopting the Syrian curriculum in TEC to accommodate Syrian refugee children in learning activities and to point out the significant changes in the education system that the Turkish government has to assist their education. The Turkish government recognizes that the school-age of Syrian refugees reaches one-third, and Turkey is the largest recipient of Syrian refugees; efforts to ensure high-quality education for refugee students are a significant problem and challenge for Turkey as a host country. The protracted Syrian conflict is also inseparable from the role of international bodies such as the UN Security Council which do not focus on conflict management and transforming it, but only on negative peace levels for the long term (Pattipeilhy 2021). Short-term and long-term strategic plans are trying to be developed, along with the design of education policies and legal arrangements. The Turkish government focuses on providing formal and informal education by involving local communities, international organizations, and NGOs to obtain financial support and collaboration with stakeholders, integrating child refugees and social mobility, trying to ensure that the Turkish government sees the significance of educational instruments (Celik & Erdogan 2017).

The outbreak of the Syrian conflict caused millions of Syrians to flee the country in 2011 and created a wave of refugees, most of whom headed for the Turkish border (Balkan & Tumen 2016). In 2012, the first wave of refugees in Turkey was 30 thousand, and in 2018, there was a significant increase to 3.5 million more, representing 3.6% of the population of Turkey. Half of the refugees are school-age children, Turkey allows them to study in Turkish public schools, but the number in 2015 is still small; around 210 thousand are enrolled in primary and secondary schools (Jones & Shaheen 2015). In school, 90% of Syrian children are reported to be enrolled in the official Turkish camps. Most refugees live outside the official camps and only 25% of refugee children outside the camps are enrolled in school. In 2016 up to 500 thousand children in Temporary Education Centers (TECs) were registered. Still, due to the low quality of teaching compared to public schools, the Turkish government did not grant accreditation to TECs managed by Syria due to limited facilities and volunteer nature with Syrian teachers who were also displaced. The Turkish government has taken the initiative to meet the needs of children, especially education, but its implementation is still not effective; many Syrian children are in situations of up to 4 years without going to any school, and around 40% of Syrian refugees children are out of school in 2017 (Aydin & Kaya 2019). This research attempts to examine Turkey's policy approach to humanitarian

aid by assisting with providing education for school-age Syrian refugee children.

Methods

To limit the scope of research, the authors limit and focus on research that elaborates on the Turkish government's foreign policy through humanitarian assistance by providing education for refugees in Turkey. Not only accepting refugees, the Turkish government also facilitates humanitarian assistance, especially education, which is an important focus for the Turkish government. This research uses a qualitative method by elaborating the data collected, analyzed, and observed in depth to explain how the Turkish government realizes its foreign policy through assistance in education for school-age Syrian refugee children as a form of humanity. The author uses a literature study technique to collect data by collecting articles and news sources. The author analyzes the data using descriptive techniques by analyzing and describing the role of the Turkish government in carrying out its foreign policy, as well as its interactions and relations with local governments based on data obtained from the literature.

Theoretical Framework

The Turkish government considers Syrian refugees a vulnerable group that requires protection through humanitarian assistance, given the context of human rights and their entitlement to rights. The protection of human rights is the main focus of cosmopolitanism theory. In addition, the emancipation of global peace and the emphasis on democratic progress are also crucial in cosmopolitanism. All world people are considered equal, so solidarity is upheld, from fellow citizens to those outside the borders, including non-citizens, such as Syrian refugees for the Turkish government. Every human being who experiences oppression, violence, and human rights violations becomes a form that is trying to be prevented as a commitment, cosmopolitanism seeks to achieve prosperity for all mankind (Gilmore 2014)

Every human being is equal, and every individual is entitled to rights is the basic argument of cosmopolitanism, so we cannot just remain silent while witnessing the suffering experienced by others, especially if this suffering can be fought and prevented. Although cosmopolitanism has the principle that the state is obliged to protect rights within state boundaries, intervention is an option responsibility to overcome losses caused by the failure of the state's role in order not to create suffering for people in the country, so that awareness and the ability to think are essential elements in theory. cosmopolitanism (Fine 2007). Seen in the role of the Turkish government towards school-age Syrian refugee children by providing educational facilities for them; the Turkish government sees the suffering and injustice experienced by these child refugees, so the humanitarian

assistance through education provided is a form of humanity that the Turkish government is trying to achieve for them. Geographically, Turkey's position as a neighboring country has also made the Turkish government feel more obligated to help them so that humanitarian missions are a top priority, especially through providing education for refugee school-age children.

Results and Discussion

Policy Approach to Adopted on School-Aged Syrian Refugees

The large number of refugees who entered Turkey suddenly had social and economic consequences; refugees who are still children account for half of all Syrian refugees, so education is one of the main problems; Turkey is also the country with the most refugee child. In 2019, out of 3.6 million Syrians, around 1.7 million were children, and 63% of Syrian refugee children went to school, according to the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Still, this figure shows that the Turkish government has not achieved access to education for Syrian children as expected (Sunata & Abdulla 2020). The Turkish government has an education policy that encourages the private sector to develop with support; as a result, there are 21 thousand private educational institutions in Turkey, and almost half of them fall into the category of more than 10 thousand formal education, while the rest are informal education. Collaborating with the EU, the needs of the Turkish government are met through funding provided by the EU. One of the funding objectives is an agenda managed by the Turkish Ministry of Education, namely the Project on Promoting the Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System (PIKTES), with a total fund of 300 million Euros. This project focuses on Syrian refugees in Turkey, and it is estimated that as many as 37 thousand refugees aged 3-5 years have received education and treatment services at the beginning of 2018. The Turkish Ministry of Education is a vital actor in enhancing the educational experience of Syrian refugee children, such as through support provided by the government to NGO-based TECs (Sunata & Özdemir 2021).

At the beginning of the arrival of Syrian refugees in Turkey in 2011, nearly 1.4 million Syrian children were of school age, namely 5-17 years. Those who could benefit from educational services in Turkey at that time were only 34 thousand before finally doubling in 2017 to 612 thousand or doubled to 20 times in just six years, showing the Turkish government's commitment to helping Syrian children's education in Turkey. AFAD (the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority) operates a primary and secondary school education center conducted in Arabic called GEM (Temporary Training Centers), aimed at providing all school-age Syrian children with the opportunity to attend school for those inside or outside the camps. The Turkish Ministry of Education established a commission

that serves student requests for studies and related placement tests; this activity provides education from preschool to high school level and involves Syrian teachers who volunteer to teach. To provide for integrating Syrian students into Turkish schools to follow the Turkish educational curriculum, the Turkish Ministry of Education has established a policy of gradually enrolling students in GEM over the next two years, effective since 2017. According to Inan (2018), it can be seen that the Turkish government is trying to make Syrian children's education policies one of its priorities and shows an effective trend, recalling that in 2012, a similar approach failed to be implemented because the number of refugees arriving continued to increase significantly (Kızıl & Dönmez).

The dilemma occurred when TECs eventually became centers of transitional education, especially with support from UN agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), strengthening their work. Meanwhile, the Turkish government, through the Ministry of National Education, is trying to allocate all Syrian citizens who attend school integrated into public schools in Turkey, it is hoped that this will be realized in 2020. Syrian refugees will also have access to formal education with an adjusted Syrian curriculum (Qaddour 2017). Constraints occur, especially in southeastern Turkey, due to limited funding and volunteer teachers, so it takes work to allocate students there. Only 0.22% is represented by the enrollment of Syrian refugees in the Turkish public school system, with residency and language barriers being the reason for this low figure (Aydin & Cinkaya 2018; Damgaci & Aydin 2018). Aydin & Kaya (2019) believe that international involvement and support are necessary for Turkey to provide education to refugee children. The Turkish government must provide financial support, especially in urban areas, to improve educational services because international cooperation is limited and inadequate support, according to Aydin & Kaya, will impact the quality received. NGOs such as UNICEF and the World Bank play a role, including the Syrian Education Association, in providing professional development programs in Turkey for Syrian children that apply Turkish language learning and Turkish education standards; this program is expected so that Syrian children can understand the Turkish school system and being able to adapt in society, especially with the ability to speak Turkish (Public Policy and Management Institute 2017; Aydin & Kaya 2019).

Through the Turkish government's policy, two Turkish state schools provide access to education for Syrian children in Istanbul. However, resources and facilities still need to be improved to achieve quality education for them (Aydin et al. 2019). The low registration of refugees in formal education programs is inversely proportional to the positive reflection of the Turkish government's policy implementation. The priority that overrides education and the lack of knowledge of available educational information is a

significant obstacle; the lack of information also results in many difficulties experienced by refugees due to unclear procedures (İçduygu & Şimşek 2016). Many schools have reached capacity limits, while demand for schools remains high, resulting in non-conformance in many provinces; some refugee youth do not have access to secondary schools when they need them to continue to higher education. In 2017, the Turkish government announced a policy that made it easier for students to apply to universities without submitting a letter proving that they had attended high school, and even entrance exams were not implemented. Curriculum and programs are obstacles as UNICEF urges the Turkish government to implement policies to protect and guarantee the right of Syrian children to go to school, which has not yet been achieved because public schools also cannot facilitate programs that are not provided by the Turkish government (Bonessi 2016; Aydın & Kaya 2019).

The Turkish government notes several factors to implement educational policies for Syrian children to be effective, such as where they live inside or outside the camp because it relates to ease of access for Syrian children if they are in the camp. Besides that, Syrian children's education policies consider factors such as the identification of children in educational age and regular enrollment systems. The government must also face conditional challenges due to various reasons that prevent Syrian children from continuing their education, mainly economic reasons, such as Syrian boys who live outside the camps to focus on work because of financial demands. At the same time, girls are married off at an early age for reasons. However, the Turkish government is overcoming this problem by providing public schools as another alternative so that Syrian children still benefit like other children in Turkey in getting this type of educational services and have the same opportunity to study as other Turkish children in public schools; Syrian children must be able to access education outside the camp so that the government tries to facilitate those who still have a willingness to learn (Emin 2019). Although some Syrian children choose temporary education centers over state schools due to the language barrier, the number of Syrian students continues to increase by more than three times in just one year, namely in 2016 and 2017, from 67 thousand initially enrolled to 181 thousand in schools that provide conventional Turkish education, similar positive results also apply to public schools (Inan 2018).

Policy Challenges and Adaptive Solutions

In 2017, with the number of refugees touching 3.4 million, Turkey spent 11.4 billion Euros helping refugees, making Turkey the second largest beneficiary country in the world (Lattimer et al. 2017). Over time, the arrival of Syrian refugees in Turkey has been silent for a long time, so the

Turkish government has changed its policy towards refugees from a temporary solution to a permanent solution; these policies concern many things, especially health and education. The government sees the need to change this policy to avoid further refugee crises, especially considering that Syrian refugees will stay for a long time or even permanently in Turkey. Although the Turkish government is committed to dealing with refugees through policies for the long term, the Turkish government is still trying to achieve short-term policies to achieve maximum results. In education policy, to facilitate children's school enrollment so that the numbers increase, Syrian children under 18 are given Turkish language education to participate in school activities (Inan 2018). The Turkish government considers Syrian children essential in adopting educational policies. Inan (2018) sees several short-term policies developed based on education in camps and referring to the assumption that Syrian children will not stay long in Turkey; for example, in 2012, when a temporary education policy was enacted allowing the curriculum to run in Arabic instead of Turkish. A year later, the refugee crisis worsened because the war in Syria was heating up, and the lack of substantive education for Syrian children became a concern of the Turkish government; a solution was sought through the Turkish Education Ministry by holding activities and agendas to facilitate education for Syrians, especially children (Seydi 2014).

Syrian refugee children often experience trauma, so psychological support is needed; school administrators bear and manage this problem if they are enrolled in Turkish public schools. The prolonged trauma that Syrian refugee children carry is an issue that causes special needs for them, so ongoing support is needed for the continuity of education for school-age Syrian refugees (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin 2015). However, access is still limited, and many do not receive psychological assistance. The needs of child refugees have not been met due to a lack of services and information. Although no special curriculum or program has been made for Syrian refugee children, the Turkish Ministry of National Education supports the education of Syrian refugee children through its policy by collaborating with TEC to offer Syrian students Turkish language courses if they wish. Unfortunately, this agenda is still hindered by resources such as inadequate school capacity and teacher abilities, but the school remains positive by supporting and trying to help Syrian students' education (Aydin & Kaya 2019).

Discrimination still occurs, with many Syrian students being mistreated by Turkish students; schools guide related students and call the parents of these Turkish students to be more friendly, which positively impacts their future interactions. Language is also one of the main reasons for hindering the process of academic activities of Syrian children; the inability to speak Turkish impacts their academic achievement. Even though teachers provide solutions with extra support for academic scores, this proves the

importance of a language because those who cannot speak Turkish result in a lack of class participation (Aydin & Kaya 2017). War trauma, which is not supported with the psychological facilities needed, is not experienced by Turkey, so a program has not been designed to handle it (Alpak et al. 2015). However, psychologically affected Syrian students are still being helped by the Turkish government, even though most teachers are not trained experts. (Aydin & Kaya 2019).

Not enrolled in formal or informal education are more than half of school-aged Syrian children, 400 thousand in 2014 were not enrolled. The government is trying to overcome this by implementing new initiatives and allocating resources to increase the number of Syrian refugee children who receive formal education. In the same year, the government of Turkey guaranteed refugee access to education, health, and employment by enacting the Law on Foreigners and International Protection in 2014, demonstrating the consistency of the Turkish government in its commitment. The Turkish government also facilitated the integration of refugee children in Turkish schools with the option of TEC or public and private schools. As a result, 60% of all school-age Syrian refugee children are enrolled in formal education in Turkey, with a student population of over 600,000. Other steps to improve the quality of education in facilitating Syrian child refugees continue to be pursued by the Turkish government, such as training Syrian teachers in TEC, as many as 20 thousand, to develop their pedagogical knowledge; the agenda implemented through the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the United Nations agency, namely UNICEF. Together with the support of the European Union (EU), Turkish language teachers and school counselors, as many as 5 thousand enrolled in Turkish public schools or TECs were hired to support this agenda; all teachers will be given training related to inclusive education, many parties such as local governments, government agencies, and NGOs are also supporting them to help with their education (Gümüş et al. 2020).

Conclusion

Turkey is showing a severe commitment to helping Syrian refugees through the policies and assistance it provides. Education is one of the priorities for the Turkish government to implement, seeing the situation of refugees who leave their country suddenly causing them not to get the education they should, children are the most affected victims, assuming that they will not return in the near future, making the government Turkey must act immediately by providing educational facilities for school-age Syrian refugee children. From administrative convenience for enrolling in Turkish public schools, adjusting the curriculum to make it easier for Syrian children, to providing Turkish language courses so they can participate in

educational activities. The Turkish government's continued commitment to strive even though several challenges must hinder, such as funds and resources that prevent the implementation of policies from running optimally, not to mention unexpected situations such as exceeded school capacity. However, the Turkish government is still trying to help Syrian child refugees by adjusting policies or involving outsiders to expedite the implementation of education. The efforts made by the Turkish government are motivated by the view of Syrian refugees as victims and human beings like them; according to the cosmopolitanism theory, everyone has the right to equal rights, so helping Syrian refugees, especially children, is a must.

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