



Lifelong Learning Competencies: A Study on Refugee and Migrant Students and Their Parents¹

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the views of preschool teachers to ensure social justice by increasing the lifelong learning competencies of refugee students and their parents by using a case study design from qualitative research methods. The study group of the research consists of 30 preschool teachers working in Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia and Turkey, who were selected through purposive sampling method. In the study, a structured interview form developed by the researchers was used and the data obtained were analyzed through descriptive and content analysis. The data were analyzed using the MAXQDA 2020 program. Based on the views of preschool teachers, the study revealed that the most important problem faced by refugee students and their parents are language barriers and cultural adaptation. This view is followed by trauma caused by displacement. According to the teachers, understanding cultural differences, empowerment, encouraging and supporting social participation, and providing equal educational opportunities to students can be effective in preventing social discrimination and inequality. As a result of the research, it is recommended that schools provide cultural sensitivity training for educators to help refugee students better understand their backgrounds and experiences, and expand bilingual education resources by implementing intensive language learning programs that focus on rapid language acquisition for refugee students.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, refugee and migrant students, cultural adaptation, pre-school education, teacher.

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Introduction

Lifelong learning is a process that covers all stages of learning from pre-school to post-retirement and addresses individual and societal needs (Laal, 2011). Lifelong learning means continuously improving one's skills and acquiring knowledge through experiences encountered throughout life (Laal et al., 2014). Lifelong learning is learning activities that enable individuals to learn anywhere and at any age, including formal and non-formal education activities (Yeşilbaş Özenç, 2023), and these

¹This study was conducted using the data obtained within the scope of the Erasmus+ project "Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Social Justice: An Online Lifelong Learning School Starting with Refugees and Migrants".

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activities help to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors (Florin et al.) Lifelong learning is crucial for personal and professional development and promotes continuous self-improvement and adaptability in various aspects of life, including career advancement (Carlson, 2019; Collins, 2009). Lifelong learning, a continuous and voluntary learning process to adapt to a changing world (Yeşilbaş Özenç & Başaran, 2024), is often based on adult education, which emphasizes forms of professional work and participation (Tight, 1998) and promotes the democratic and emancipatory goals of education (Flemming, 2020). Having established that lifelong learning is a continuous, self-directed process that empowers individuals to adapt to changing circumstances, it becomes clear that the development of certain competencies is essential.

Lifelong learning competencies are the basic skills and abilities that enable individuals to continuously acquire and apply knowledge throughout their lives. These competencies are increasingly recognized as important for personal and professional development in a rapidly changing world. The European Union has identified eight key competencies required for lifelong learning. These are communication in the mother tongue, communication in a foreign language, mathematical competence, basic competencies in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competencies, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression (Adabaş & Kaygin, 2016; Şahin & Koca, 2017). Lifelong learning competencies are continuous, collaborative, self-directed, active, broad in scope, lasting, positive, satisfying, and applicable to one's profession and all aspects of life (Collins, 2009). In summary, all these lifelong learning competencies have an important place in individuals' continuous learning and developing their knowledge and skills.

Lifelong learning activities are essential for refugees and migrants who have to live in other countries for various reasons. Lifelong learning for refugee and migrant students is a critical issue that involves various educational, social, and psychological challenges. These challenges are influenced by factors such as language barriers, cultural differences, and traumatic experiences of forced migration. In addition to challenges in all areas of life, refugee and migrant students face numerous challenges in educational settings, which can significantly impact learning outcomes and individual well-being. Language learning is the first challenge for refugee and migrant students, as it is the key to integration and adaptation to a new cultural and linguistic environment (Bingöl, 2021). Refugee and migrant students often find it difficult to learn the language of the host country. This affects their ability to understand course content and communicate effectively with their teachers and peers (Çelik, 2021; Cavadova, 2023; Yilmazel & Atay, 2022). There is a lack of special educational resources and support programs in schools that address the specific needs of refugee and migrant students, such as language learning programs and culturally sensitive teaching practices (Arar et al., 2019; Crea, 2016; Taylor & Sidhu, 2011). This situation causes students to experience communication problems and have difficulty adapting to the country of immigration.

Language barriers experienced by students also significantly affect parents' participation in education. Language barriers faced by parents due to not knowing the language of the country of immigration can negatively affect students' academic progress (Graham et al., 2016; Cavadova, 2023). These students have difficulty adapting to new cultural norms and educational expectations, leading to feelings of isolation and social exclusion (Çelik et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2016; Hayes, 2016; Koehler & Schneider, 2019). Lack of adequate support services for refugee and migrant students to adapt to school, complex registration processes in schools (Çelik et al.; Koehler & Schneider, 2019), lack of access to resources, inflexible curricula (Mock-Muñoz de Luna et al., 2020), and teachers not being trained to teach students from different cultures (Bunar, 2019), these students face challenges in learning a new language, adapting to unfamiliar educational and social systems, and coping with the trauma associated with forced displacement (Block et al., 2014).

Refugee and migrant students may be viewed negatively by their peers and school staff and may experience mental health problems due to traumatic events (Clausson & Cowell, 2019). Many refugee and migrant students have experienced trauma before and during migration, which can lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. These students face difficulties in socio-psychological adaptation to school due to their inability to interact with the local community and lack of communication (Khachatryan, 2019). These psychosocial challenges negatively affect their ability to

focus and succeed in school (Graham et al., 2016). To overcome these challenges faced by refugee students, teachers need to be trained to have the competence to teach these students and take into account the needs and individual situations of students (Roxas & Fruja, 2019). It is also important for teachers to provide guidance for migrant and refugee students to adapt to school.

Lifelong learning for refugee and migrant students is a multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive approach to address their unique educational needs and barriers to accessing education. Schools should implement inclusive educational practices that take into account the social, cultural, and educational backgrounds of refugee and migrant students. This includes improving foreign language proficiency (Biasutti et al., 2019; Taylor & Sidhu, 2011; Wrech et al., 2018) and ensuring students' adaptation to the country of origin. In schools with refugee and migrant students, it is important to create an inclusive curriculum that uses diversity as a learning opportunity, provides interlanguage interaction, and encourages civic engagement. This approach provides cultural and socio-political relevance and creates the necessary basis for the education of migrant and refugee students (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017). In addition, creative and flexible teaching strategies are necessary to address the complexity of teaching in an intercultural context. Inclusive approaches, creativity, flexibility, and training are key strategies to support the integration of migrant and refugee students and promote the well-being of the whole class (Biasutti et al., 2019). A holistic educational approach that addresses social and emotional needs can promote refugee and migrant students' success in education and their future integration into the labor market and society (Cerna, 2019).

Preschool education for refugee and migrant students plays a critical role in developing lifelong learning competencies. Early learning lays the foundations for individuals' language, social skills and problem-solving abilities (Bakken et al., 2017). Refugee and immigrant students, in particular, benefit more from early education due to the difficulties they face in cultural transition (Leseman, 2007). Research shows that developing lifelong learning competencies increases the success of refugee children in their educational processes and facilitates their integration into society (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016). Cognitive and social skills acquired in preschool support children's development throughout their educational life and make them more resilient to future challenges (OECD, 2020). At the same time, lifelong learning skills acquired at an early age help refugee children bridge the gap between their own culture and the culture of the country they live in (Pinson & Arnot, 2007). These skills both increase individual well-being and strengthen social cohesion (Heckman, 2011). As a result, developing refugee and migrant students' lifelong learning competencies at an early age is an important strategy that supports both individual success and social justice (UNESCO, 2021). This study reveals that developing lifelong learning competencies of refugee and migrant students and their parents through education can play an important role in reducing inequalities in society and ensuring social integration. In the literature, it is stated that students who receive education at an early age develop lifelong learning competencies and these competencies increase individuals' participation in society (Heckman & Mosso, 2014). In this context, supporting the participation of refugee and immigrant families in lifelong learning processes will contribute to both individual and social development. This study aims to contribute to the literature by revealing the role of preschool teachers in this process and how they can improve the learning competencies of refugee students and their parents.

Method

Research Model

This research was conducted using data obtained from the participants within the scope of the Erasmus+ Project "Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Social Justice: An Online Lifelong Learning School Starting with Refugees and Migrants." It is thought that the lifelong learning competencies of refugee and immigrant citizens and students attending preschool education can be developed by preschool teachers. This study aims to determine preschool teachers' views on ensuring social justice by increasing refugee students and their parents' lifelong learning competencies. The research was conducted using a case study design, one of the qualitative research methods. A case study is a qualitative research design in which one or more than one situation or event is examined in depth

(McMillan, 2000). The study aimed to investigate teachers' views on the problems and education of refugee students and parents in depth with a holistic single case study design (Yin, 1984).

Study Group

The research study group consists of preschool teachers working in Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia and Turkey, which are project partners. Using the purposive sampling method, the study included 30 preschool teachers with refugee students in their schools. In addition, preschool teachers with at least five years of teaching experience were selected through a criterion sampling method to include teachers with experience in the education of refugee students and their parents. To ensure participant confidentiality during the study, each participant was given a code-named P1, P2... P30.

Data Collection Tools

In the study, participant views were obtained through a structured interview form called "Lifelong Learning Interview Questions" developed by the researchers. The interview form consists of eight questions, including "What do you think are the most important problems that refugee preschool students and their families face in a different society and culture?". Within the scope of the research, the participants were asked questions about the problems that refugee students and their families face in a different society and culture, the adequacy of the education policies in the country regarding the problems of refugee students, what teachers do for the linguistic skills, social-emotional development and school readiness of refugee students, what is done to increase the level of awareness of parents, and finally the lifelong learning of refugee students and their families. The interview form was presented to the participants online via Google Forms. The responses from the participants were converted into written documents, and the analysis process started.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the participants' views were analyzed through descriptive and content analysis. In this context, preschool teachers' views on issues such as refugee students and their parents' adaptation to the new society, students' learning, and parents' awareness were examined in detail. The data were analyzed using MAXQDA 2020 software. During the data analysis, deductively, themes were created based on the interview questions. These themes are problems experienced, education policies, developing linguistic skills, preparing students for school, social-emotional development, parent awareness, parental guidance, and eliminating social discrimination and inequalities. During the analysis, codes and categories were reached based on the teachers' opinions, and these findings were categorized under the themes such as the most critical problems that refugee students and their parents face are language barriers and cultural adaptation.

Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

The research was conducted by considering validity, reliability, and ethical elements. Expert opinion was used to ensure credibility in the study. The structured interview form created by the researchers to examine preschool teachers' views on refugee students and their parents was examined by two field experts with the title of professor. As a result of the opinions received from the field experts, the interview form was finalized by making corrections. The interview form was pilot-tested with four participants from different countries, and the statements that were not understood and that could cause misunderstanding were corrected. The final version of the interview form was re-examined by field experts and made usable for the research. To ensure transferability in the study, the research process and findings were explained in detail to ensure replicability in case the research is applied to different study groups or carried out under similar conditions. The participants' direct statements were included during the presentation of the findings. Finally, to avoid ethical violations during the research, the confidentiality of the participants was emphasized, and the names of the participants were expressed with code numbers so as not to reveal their identity information.

Findings

Based on the views of preschool teachers, the most critical problems experienced by refugee students and their parents in different societies and cultures were addressed in the study. According to

the responses of the teachers, the most critical problems that refugee students and their parents face are language barriers and cultural adaptation. This view is followed by trauma from displacement (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Problems Faced by Refugee Students and Parents



Teachers stated that refugee students and their parents have difficulties learning new languages, which causes difficulties in adapting to a new society and culture. Teachers' views on this issue are as follows:

"Refugee preschool children and their parents often meet language barriers, cultural challenges, and limited access to support services." (P3)

"The vital challenges for refugee preschool children and their parents in a new society and culture include language barriers, cultural adjustment, trauma from displacement, limited access to resources, and discrimination." (P11)

Teachers reported that students and their parents had cultural adaptation problems, were traumatized by the impact of leaving their country, and had difficulty adapting to the new society. Teachers also stated that students and their families were excluded and discriminated against by the new society. The views of a few teachers on this issue are as follows:

"Refugee children and their families face challenges such as learning a new language, adapting to a different culture, coping with past traumas, and a lack of resources. Sometimes, they also face unfair treatment." (P8)

"Transitioning to a new and different culture can be challenging for refugee children and their parents. Differences in social norms, traditions, and expectations can cause stress and confusion, especially for young children who are developing their cultural identities." (P1)

Teachers reported that refugee students and their parents experienced issues such as cultural adjustment, trauma due to displacement, and language barriers, as well as discrimination, unfair treatment, limited resources, and limited access to support services. Teachers reported that students felt inadequately aware, excluded, and unhappy, and that they made efforts to address these issues. Before their efforts, teachers were asked whether their country's education policies could address the problems faced by refugee students. Some teachers indicated that their country's education policies were sufficient to address the problems faced by refugee students. Participant opinions related to this are as follows:

"Our education policies are developed to address the issues of refugee children through inclusive curriculum, language support, cultural sensitivity training and community outreach." (P7)

"I think our education system tries to help the refugee children. It aims to make everyone feel included, help them learn languages, and be nice to different cultures." (P25)

However, most teachers in the study indicated that education policies in their countries were not adequate to meet the needs of refugee students and their families. Teachers indicated that although education policies offered various solutions for refugee children, they still had concerns about the effectiveness of these policies.:

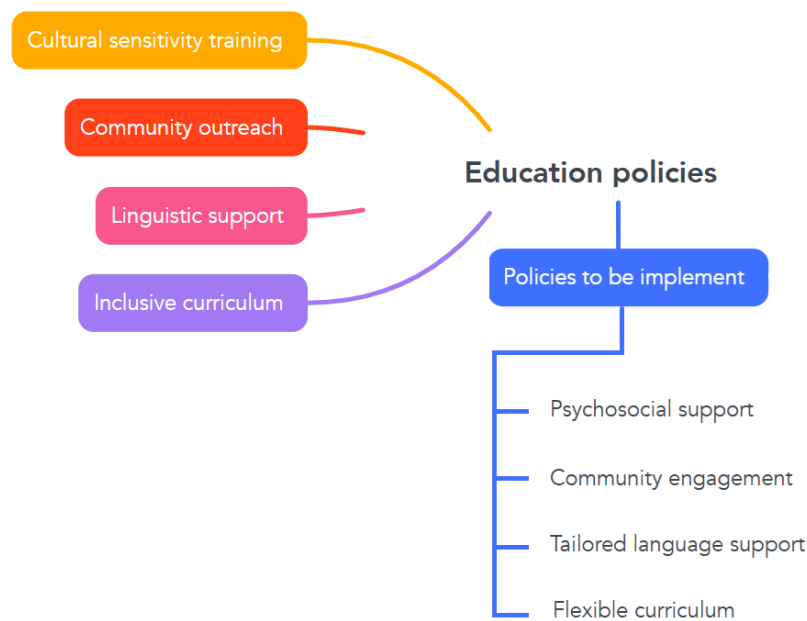
“Well, I think the education system tries to do something, but I'm not sure if it's enough to support refugee children with the problems they face.” (P22)

“While education policies may offer some solutions, they might not fully address refugee students' complex issues. (P18)”

Teachers believe that the education policies developed are insufficient to solve the problems of refugee students and their parents. The findings on education policies for refugee students are as follows (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Education Policies for Refugee Students



Teachers state that more comprehensive and inclusive policies should be developed. After evaluating the education policies of their countries, teachers were asked what kind of education policy should be followed for refugee students. Most teachers stated that “cultural sensitivity education” should be included in the curriculum as part of the education policy. It was stated that providing cultural sensitivity to students in schools could be effective in the adaptation of refugee students to school and their environment. In this context, teachers stated that a unifying and inclusive curriculum that embraces intercultural differences should be prepared and implemented. It was understood that another issue emphasized by teachers was language support for students and their families. Teachers stated that the most important difficulty faced by refugee students was learning and communicating in the language of the country they migrated to, and emphasized the importance of developing policies in this context. The opinion of a teacher is as follows:

“No, I don't think that my country's education policies are capable of addressing the problems faced by refugee children. Although efforts have been made, there are still gaps and challenges. Language barriers are significant issue which needs to be solved. Policies should allocate resources for intensive language programs to help refugee children catch up and integrate.” (P2)

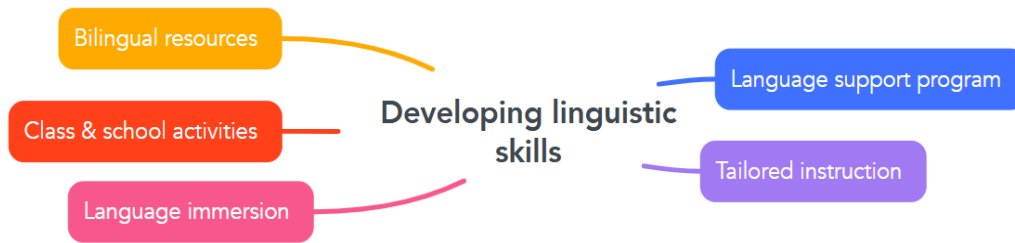
Teachers also stated that students and their families should be provided with guidance and counseling services and that it is necessary to increase such guidance and counseling practices in schools. Teachers expressed the importance of including practices that encourage the social inclusion

of refugee students in education policies and providing social assistance to refugee students and their parents. When teachers were asked which policies should be implemented for refugee students and their parents, teachers stated that support from various sectors and stakeholders, data-based monitoring, psychosocial support, individualized language support, collaborative work, and advanced teacher training should be provided. Teachers believe reception and guidance programs for refugee students and their parents can be effective.

Following the educational policies, teachers were asked what kind of activities they do for refugee students to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills throughout their lives outside the curriculum. Teachers stated that they conduct various practices to improve the language skills of refugee students. Most of the teachers said that they do “language immersion.” In addition, they used bilingual educational resources and taught new vocabulary by bridging the gap between the student's mother tongue and the new language. The findings regarding the language development of refugee students are given below (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Developing Linguistic Skills



Teachers stated that they use course materials in both the first language and the new language to be learned so that students learn faster and more effectively by comparing the first language with the new language. Teachers expressed the methods they used to improve students' language skills as follows:

“We teach them some words in their old language and the new one, and try to make it fun.” (P19)

“As a teacher, I provide language support through immersion techniques, bilingual resources, and tailored instruction to help refugee students improve their linguistic skills in their country of origin's language.” (P3)

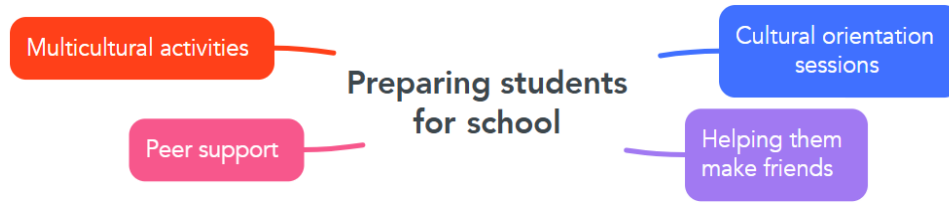
“To enhance linguistic skills, we offer language immersion, bilingual resources, and tailored language support.” (P5)

Teachers stated that to prevent the language learning problem of refugee students, they provide personalized education and deal with each student individually. According to the teachers' opinions, it was understood that the students who were individually taken care of made progress in language learning. Based on the teachers' opinions, it is seen that the teachers tend towards language learning of refugee students.

Teachers reported creating language classes to develop refugee students' linguistic skills, developing content to teach new vocabulary, and encouraging students to learn languages through daily interactions. Teachers implement language learning through classroom and school activities to minimize students' exposure to language barriers. Following the students' linguistic development, we asked what teachers do to help students adapt to the school environment in a country with a different culture and language (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Preparing Students for School



Teachers emphasized the importance of cultural adaptation programs in ensuring students' adaptation to school. They stated that multicultural activities are practical in making students feel that they belong to the school:

"We provide language learning programs and orientation sessions to prepare students for school in a country with a different culture and language." (P24)

"Cultural orientation sessions, peer support networks, and multicultural activities aid in preparing them for school." (P9)

"We prepare them for school with cultural orientation and support." (P16)

Teachers expressed the importance of peer support in students' adaptation to school; in this context, it was adequate for students to be supported by their friends. Teachers stated that they encouraged other students to support and communicate with refugee students, which helped refugee students to adapt to the classroom and school. Teachers indicated that counseling and peer support played an important role in students' adaptation:

"We also offer support services such as tutoring, counseling, and peer mentoring to help students overcome the challenges of adapting to a new school and culture." (P2)

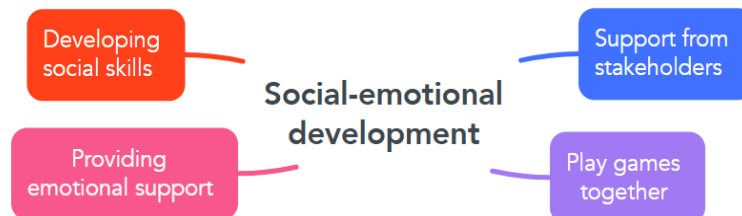
In addition, creating a supportive environment in the classroom and enabling students to make friends are also among teachers' practices. While expressing what they do for refugee students in social-emotional development (to allow them to establish relationships with their peers and interact socially), the teachers stated that peer interaction is effective in students' social and emotional development, similar to school adaptation. In addition, providing emotional support to students in the process of adapting to the new culture, talking to them, and making them feel good are among the behaviors that teachers perform:

"We talk with them when they feel sad, help them be friends with others, and play games together." (P28)

In addition to peer interaction and emotional support, teachers stated that the support of stakeholders is needed to ensure the social-emotional development of refugee students (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Social-Emotional Development



Teachers emphasized the importance of community support and stakeholders in developing refugee students. They stated that the community has a vital role in students' social-emotional development. Teachers indicated that they conducted various activities to support students' social-emotional development. These activities included playing games with students, group discussions, team-building activities, and role-playing scenarios:

“We focus on activities and programs that promote social-emotional development, such as group discussions, team-building exercises, and role-playing scenarios to help students establish relationships and interact socially with their peers.” (P26)

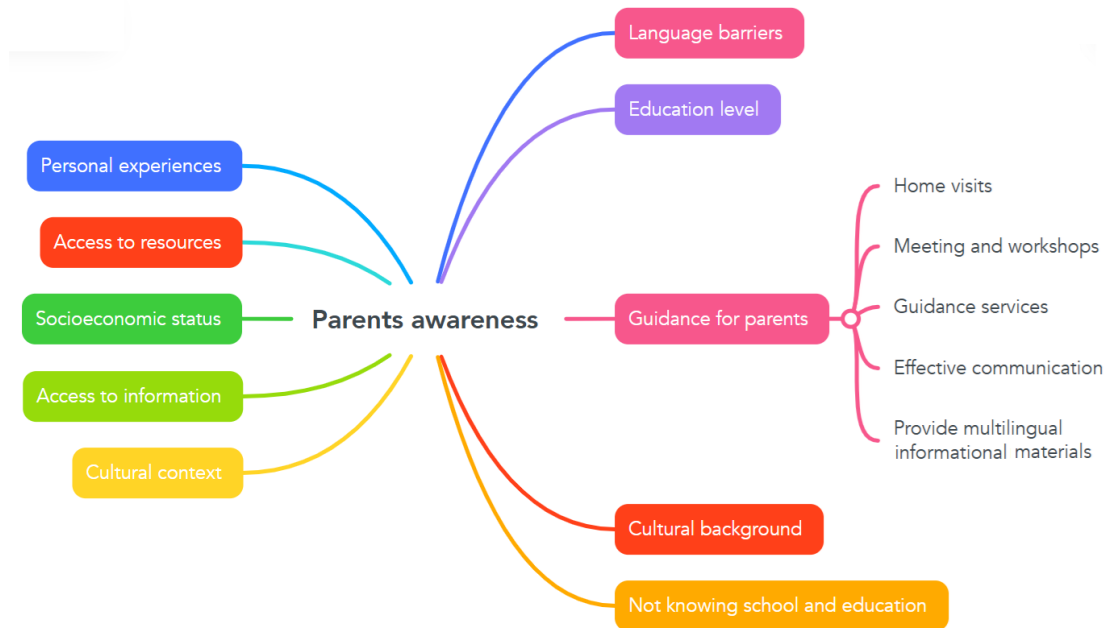
In summary, teachers stated that they tried various practices for refugee students' linguistic, cultural, and social-emotional development. The teachers defined the level of awareness of the students' families, in other words, their awareness, and stated that the level of understanding of the students' families is affected by many factors. For example, knowing the school and the education system, language barrier, access to information and resources, parents' level of education, parents' socioeconomic level, cultural background, and personal experiences affect their awareness of their children's education:

“Parental awareness of children's education can vary widely, influenced by cultural background, access to information, and personal experiences. While some parents may have a strong awareness and involvement in their child's learning, others may face barriers such as language or lack of familiarity with the education system.” (P14)

Teachers believe that attending parent-teacher conferences, cooperating with the school in extracurricular activities, and helping students with homework will increase parents' awareness of their children. Teachers stated that to contribute to students' development, they guide parents to access information and gain awareness. In this context, teachers stated that they organized parent-teacher conferences to inform parents about students' adaptation to the new culture and society. Teachers' views on parental awareness and parental guidance are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Parents' Awareness and Guidance for Parents



Teachers stated that they carried out many practices related to parent awareness and guidance for parents. In addition to the meetings, teachers aim to raise parents' awareness through home visits. In addition, teachers aim to raise awareness of parents through informational materials such as brochures, books, and online tools.

“Schools provide informational materials such as brochures, books, and online resources designed to help parents better understand their child's development and how they can effectively support it.” (P30)

They also stated that teachers inform parents by providing one-to-one counseling services and offering them various resources through technology-based applications. Teachers stated that in

addition to materials such as books and brochures, technological tools are frequently used to inform parents:

“We facilitate parent workshops, provide informational materials in multiple languages, and offer one-on-one consultations to guide parents in accessing information and raising awareness about their preschool students' development. Additionally, we encourage open communication channels between parents and educators, establish parent-teacher associations, and utilize technology platforms for sharing resources and updates.” (P27)

Preschool teachers carry out many practices to ensure refugee students' development and adaptation to new situations/environments. Raising parents' awareness can also be effective in helping the students adapt to the new school. Teachers believe that continuous learning and development of refugee students and their parents through lifelong learning and their integration into their society will effectively eliminate social discrimination and inequalities that may occur among students (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Eliminating Social Discrimination and Inequalities



A teacher who believes that the continuous learning and development of refugee students and their families through lifelong learning will be effective in eliminating social discrimination and inequalities that may occur between them and their peers:

“Continuous learning and integration through lifelong learning initiatives can reduce social discrimination and inequalities among refugee students by fostering inclusion and understanding within the community.” (P29)

Teachers believe that lifelong learning can raise public awareness and reduce social discrimination and inequality, especially toward students from different cultures and their parents. Teachers believe that lifelong learning can have a significant impact on students' learning and on society's understanding and empathy towards refugee students.

“Lifelong learning and integration can combat social discrimination and inequalities by fostering empathy, understanding, and inclusivity within society.” (P12)

Teachers stated that lifelong learning can also prevent students from inequalities and is fundamental in ceasing social discrimination. Furthermore, according to teachers, understanding cultural differences, empowerment, encouraging and supporting social participation, and providing students with equal educational opportunities can mainly prevent social discrimination and inequality. Similarly, teachers stated that providing support and guidance services to refugee students and their parents and making efforts to integrate them into society is crucial. In addition to the responsibility of teachers towards refugee students and their parents, teachers also emphasized the importance of social support and the need to support cultural diversity in society to encourage social participation. To sum up, teachers believe that school stakeholders and the community have essential roles in helping refugee students and their parents adapt to the new society and culture as well as to their new school.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

This study has shown that linguistic obstructions and adaptation to culture are two major challenges that refugee students encounter while being adapted to new educational settings. Preschool teachers highlighted that stronger school support networks, including comprehensive language assistance, culturally relevant curricula, and social support services are needed as well. The findings have shown that current education policies are insufficient to address the needs of refugee students. To improve the educational needs of refugee students, more inclusive and effective policies should be developed and implemented. These should include not only language and cultural support but also family support, trainings for teachers, integrating lifelong learning key competencies into the curriculum in a more effective way, making NGOs (non-governmental organizations) be aware of these children and especially help parents be aware of the development of their children.

More specifically, the findings of this study have emerged several critical challenges that refugee students and their families face, such as the most prominent issues language barriers, cultural adaptation, and trauma from displacement. It can be seen that these challenges are consistent with the broader literature on refugee integration, where language acquisition and cultural adjustment are frequently cited as significant obstacles (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; McBrien, 2005). The findings have revealed that language barriers negatively affect not only academic but also social interaction. Especially in the preschool period, children's inability to make friends, lack of communication in the classroom, and their inability to express themselves increase the feeling of emotional exclusion. In addition, during the cultural adaptation process, students have to learn not only the language but also new social norms, traditions, and school culture. Teachers' observations reveal that this situation causes psycho social effects such as anxiety, introversion, and lack of self-confidence in students. To prevent or minimize all these challenges, benefitting from lifelong learning competencies may be effective. Therefore, this study not only supports the general findings in the previous literature about the difficulties that refugees face but also contributes to the literature with concrete data obtained from the field on how these problems are experienced and how lifelong learning competencies may help teachers support these students in preschool education.

As language skills are vital for understanding the curriculum, participating in class, and forming peer relationships, the development of language skill can mean socially and psychologically healthy individuals. This aligns with Cummins' (2000) framework on the importance of language proficiency for both academic and social success in bilingual settings. The teachers' emphasis on the need for language support systems, such as language immersion programs and bilingual resources, reflects a widely recognized approach to addressing these challenges. Effective language support can significantly improve refugee students' academic outcomes and ease their integration into both school and social environment (Bigelow & King, 2014). This may help students adapt to new social norms, values and expectations as the process of adjusting to these can be demanding for refugee students, especially when they differ from those of their own countries. The teachers' observations of the stress and confusion experienced by students during this transition are consistent with Berry's (1997) acculturation theory, which describes the psychological impact of navigating between different cultural identities. The teachers' recommendation for cultural sensitivity training and inclusive curricula is in line with best practices that suggest creating a culturally responsive educational environment can help reduce these problems (Gay, 2018). In this study trauma from displacement and its effect on students' psychological well-being has been revealed as critical issue expressed by preschool teachers. Refugee children often carry the psychological scars of their experiences, which can be experienced in various ways, including anxiety, depression, and difficulties in concentration (Fazel et al., 2012). The teachers' need for more comprehensive psychosocial support within schools underscores the necessity for interventions that address both the educational and emotional needs of refugee students. Programs that include counseling, peer support networks, and social-emotional learning activities can be effective in helping refugee children cope with all the trauma and help them build resilience (Betancourt & Khan, 2008) as well.

The findings have also revealed a critical gap in education policies concerning refugee students. While some teachers have stated efforts by their countries' education systems to support refugee students, the majority has expressed problems about the adequacy and effectiveness of these policies

as Taylor and Sidhu (2011) has expressed in their study that this issue causes a gap in education systems worldwide. The teachers' suggestions for more comprehensive policies, including intensive language programs, cultural sensitivity education, and enhanced guidance services, align with educational researchers' recommendations as Pinson & Arnot (2007) has also stated in their study. Along with these earlier researches, the current study has revealed some other issues raised by preschool teachers, focusing especially on the lived reality in early childhood education system. Preschool teachers' opinions in particular highlighted the gap between the goals of policies and the realities of the classroom. Lack of real-world implementation, distributing resources, and follow-up methods was often mentioned by the preschool teachers in this study, despite the fact that several nations have included inclusive education measures at the policy level. This reveals that unless current policies are implemented with adequate support systems, they may continue to be essentially rhetorical. In addition, the preschool teachers emphasized that the importance of community support and stakeholders in developing refugee students has a vital role in students' social-emotional development. This means NGOs (non-governmental organizations) may take role in helping both refugee students and their families integrate into new society. They can work with specialists within their scope. They may coordinate national and/or international projects to support these students together with their families and even with their teachers.

Another important finding in this study is that teachers believe that developing lifelong learning competencies can reduce social discrimination and inequality against refugee students and their parents as they become more adapted to the new society. This study makes an important contribution to the literature by revealing the importance of considering lifelong learning skills in the context of the integration of refugee students and their families into the society they have newly joined and their inclusion into social life. With a quality education provided in the context of key competencies for lifelong learning and with the support of the school and the environment, it may be possible to eliminate inequalities and exclusion and create more livable environments.

Within the light of the findings of the study, some key suggestions are given below:

1. Schools should apply intensive language programs on effective language acquisition for refugee students. These programs should include bilingual education resources that bridge the gap between the students' native languages and the target language they are acquiring.
2. Schools should provide in-service cultural training for teachers to help them better understand the backgrounds of refugee students and develop empathy.
3. Multicultural activities should be integrated into the curriculum by preschool teachers.
4. Peer mentoring programs in which refugee students are paired with local students should be promoted.
5. Schools should increase access to counseling and social support services for the needs of refugee students.
6. Schools should develop comprehensive programs to involve the parents of refugee students in the education of their children.
7. NGOs of the communities should be aware of the issues of refugees in their societies and develop activities and/or projects to help these people join the society.
8. Policymakers should develop education policies that specifically address the needs of refugee students.

Suggestions for researchers are as follows:

1. Comparative studies across different educational systems can be carried out to compare how different countries or regions address the educational needs of refugee students.
2. The study group may be teachers from different subject areas such as foreign language teachers, science teachers, etc...

Ethical Declaration

All ethical principles and rules were meticulously followed in conducting this study. The study was prepared in accordance with the "Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Productive Artificial Intelligence in

Scientific Research and Publication Activities of Higher Education Institutions” published by the Council of Higher Education in 2024.

Author Contribution Rate

The first author carried out the research design and abstract section of the study; the second author carried out the introduction, methodology, and findings section of the study; the third author carried out the discussion and conclusion section, and the final reading.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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