THE POTENTIAL OF A PUBLIC PRESCHOOL INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE GREATER SOCIAL COHESION BETWEEN THE REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN TÜRKİYE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

QİMTİ ZEHRA PAİENJTON

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

JULY 2023

Approval of the thesis:

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ABSTRACT

THE POTENTIAL OF A PUBLIC PRESCHOOL INTERVENTION TO PROMOTE GREATER SOCIAL COHESION BETWEEN THE REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN TÜRKİYE

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July 2023, 203 pages

Türkiye is unique among countries affected by influx of Syrian refugees to accommodate the refugees within the national education system using a single shift shared space model. This study examined how preschool children and parents from host and refugee communities are navigating social relations in the context of a diverse public preschool. Implementing the study as a pragmatic action research, the researcher also supported the school, which was located in the Altındağ district of Ankara, to engage parents and children in the implementation of an adapted bibliotherapy intervention. This entailed co-reading and co-developing a picturebook in one preschool classroom, with the objective of enhancing social interactions. Children and parents from both communities, as well as the teacher and principal, were included as participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted before and after the intervention to ensure they are given voice. The children's drawings and the researcher's in-class observations were used as complementary data. The study revealed the critical role of language in interactions and how the challenges of refugee children to converse in Turkish was preventing friendships among host community children and refugee children. At the same time, predominantly ingroup play and limited social interactions with host community children were not allowing for

enabling conditions for the language acquisition that would typically be expected in immersive contexts. The adapted bibliotherapy intervention was appreciated by participants and empowered them to identify their aspirations and agency with regard to improved social cohesion. Implications for replication and improving the effectiveness of the intervention are discussed.

Keywords: refugee education, preschool intervention, parent engagement, social cohesion

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ MÜLTECİ VE EV SAHİBİ TOPLULUKLAR ARASINDAKİ SOSYAL UYUMU GÜÇLENDİRMEDE BİR DEVLET ANAOKULUNDA YAPILAN MÜDAHALE PROGRAMININ POTANSİYELİ

PAIENJTON, Qimti Zehra
Yüksek Lisans, Temel Eğitim, Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bölümü
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Temmuz 2023, 203 sayfa

Türkiye, Suriyeli mülteci göçünden etkilenen ülkeler arasında, eğitimde ortak zaman ve alan modelini kullanarak, mülteci çocukları ulusal eğitim sistemine entegre eden yegane ülkedir. Bu araştırmada, kültürel ve dil çeşitliliğine sahip bir devlet anaokulunda ev sahibi ve mülteci topluluklara mensup okul öncesi çocukların ve ailelerinin sosyal ilişkilerini nasıl yönettikleri incelenmiştir. Bununla birlikte, çalışmayı pragmatik bir eylem araştırması olarak tasarlayıp uygulayan araştırmacı, Ankara'nın Altındağ ilçesinde bulunan bu okulda, ebeveynleri ve çocukları dahil ederek uyarlanmış bir bibliyoterapi müdahalesi uygulamıştır. Temel amacı sosyal etkileşimleri geliştirmek olan müdahale, birlikte resimli bir kitap okuma ve devamı niteliğinde birlikte resimli bir kitap yazma sürecini içermiştir. Araştımanın katılımcılarını her iki topluluktan çocuklar ve aileleri, öğretmen ve okul müdürü oluşturmuştur. Katılımcıların seslerinin duyulmasını sağlamak için müdahale öncesi ve sonrasında yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Çocukların çizimleri ve araştırmacının sınıf içi gözlemleri ise tamamlayıcı veri olarak kullanılmıştır. Çalışma sonuçları, dilin sosyal etkileşimlerdeki kritik rolünü, mülteci çocukların Türkçe'ye dair yaşadıkları zorlukları ve bu durumun ev sahibi çocuklar ile arkadaşlık kurmalarını ne şekillerde engellediğini ortaya koymuştur. Aynı zamanda çocukların kendi

içlerinde oyun oynaması ve sosyal ilişki kurmasının, çocukların birlikte eğitim gördüğü çeşitlilik barındıran sınıflarda beklenenin aksine, dil öğrenme süreçlerine ket vurabildiği görülmüştür. Katılımcılar, uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi müdahalesine ilgi ve beğeniyle katılırken, sosyal uyumu güçlendirmeye yönelik istekleri ve çeşitli eylemlilikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Son olarak, geliştirilip uygulanan müdahalenin etkinliğini artırma ve yaygınlaştırma yolları tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: mülteci eğitimi, erken çocuklukta müdahele, aile katılımı, sosyal uyum

To all children affected by forced displacement.
May this displacement become your source of infinite resilience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would have been absolutely impossible to complete without the unwavering support of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Karslı-Çalamak. She joined the faculty at the Middle East Technical University (METU) at the most opportune moment for me and our shared interest in refugee education proved to be a solid foundation for the design and execution of this study. Elif Hocam, thank you for all the invaluable guidance, brilliant advice and copious amounts of patience. Thank you for welcoming the practitioner in me even though it meant more effort to dig out and groom the researcher in me. Thank you for honoring and nurturing the humanitarian spirit of the study even as you advised adjustments to ensure the necessary academic rigor. Thank you for trusting me to come through even though it may have taken me longer than other students. Thank you for being so generous with your encouragement and helping me overcome all obstacles along the way. And thank you also for the kindness with which you did it all. It was my greatest privilege to work with you on this study and I wish you all the best in your own ongoing and future research endeavors.

I would next like to offer my heartfelt gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hasibe Özlen Demircan from METU and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ersoy Erdemir from Boğaziçi University for their time and willingness to join the thesis committee and for their thoughtful reviews and feedback. Özlen Hocam and Ersoy Hocam, I was so fortunate to have you as my committee members and this thesis has benefitted considerably from your excellent suggestions. Thank you and wish you all the best as well.

The Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at METU has been a fabulous academic home for me for almost 4 years. I would like to thank all the faculty members in the Department, especially Prof. Dr. Feyza Erden, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Serap Sevimli-Çelik and Assist. Prof. Dr. Volkan Şahin for their support in ensuring I could complete all the program requirements. I would also like to thank my teaching assistants and fellow students for their welcoming and supportive attitudes, with special thanks to Berfin Yapar and Zeliha Demirci Ünal for their help at extremely critical moments.

I am also grateful to Assist. Prof. Dr. Gökhan Öztürk from the Mathematics and Science Education Department for introducing me to the world of qualitative research.

The genesis of this study can be traced back to my time as the manager of the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) Program for Syrians and other refugees at UNICEF Türkiye. I have many to thank in my UNICEF family for supporting me in this journey: Philippe Duamelle, Nona Zicherman, Iraz Öykü Soyalp and Caner Esenyel for welcoming me aboard and working with me tirelessly from day one to ensure we were doing all we could to support refugee children in Türkiye to continue their education; Dilek Karagöz for leading me to the METU Elementary and Early Childhood Education Department back in 2019 so I could take this work forward as part of my graduate studies; Rita Neves, Burcu Uzer and Mohamad Taki Atassi for helping me create the first of the two beautiful bilingual picturebooks that have served as the soul of this action research; Özlem Gökalp for helping me review, finalize and print both book manuscripts; Gülgün Kozan Köse for helping me find affordable interpreters for the extensive fieldwork; Gozde Ülküer for introducing me to her superstar mom Prof. Dr. Nurper Ülküer whose encouragement and support have been vital to this study; and last but not least, Marina Filcheva, James Gray, Altuğ Akın, Gilmar Zambrana-Cruz, Can Remzi Ergen, Silvia Mestroni and Brenda Haiplik for their unending moral support as I transitioned back into academia after almost a whole decade and struggled to regain the sure footing I had left behind at UNICEF. You are the most amazing work family I have ever had and I hope to stay connected for years to come. From this very same chapter of my life, I would also like to thank two dear colleagues and friends from the Turkish Red Crescent Society, Ali Eren Karadeniz and Damla Çalık, whose tireless efforts and collaborative attitudes provided both inspiration and hope for navigating differences constructively and forging strong cross-group friendships.

The fieldwork for this study benefitted from yet another village of dedicated supporters. I would like to thank Adeviye Mutlu for her support with Turkish-English interpretation, Nahid Rauf for her support with Farsi-English and Turkish-English interpretation, and Mustafa Almoghrabi and Ahmad Alhasan for their support with Arabic-English interpretation. I would also like to thank Erdem Ceydilek from the International Students Office at METU for the outreach to Arabic-speaking students

on campus which led to the identification of the Arabic-English interpreters. And I am very grateful to Akın Canko for his brilliant design of the two picturebooks, and the speed and care with which he worked on them to ensure the intervention could be completed before the end of the school year. Most of all, I would like to offer my utmost gratitude to the children and parents who participated in the study, and to the teacher and school principal who made it all possible. I could not have dreamed of better collaborators for this action research. Thank you for your trust, your openness and your insights. You opened my eyes to how much I still do not know and you inspired me with your unbounded resilience and integrity. Thank you for welcoming me into your community and seeing our differences as strengths rather than weaknesses. I will be forever grateful to you.

Another inspirational bunch to whom I am eternally grateful is my biological family: to my mother Sophia Bokhari for her amazing ability to see stories of kindness and strength everywhere, as well as her lifelong care and love which has nurtured me to be the human I am today and has always motivated me to help build the humanity I seek in this world; to my father M. Haani Paienjton Sr. for his unrelenting determination and work ethic, as well as his lifelong support and confidence in me because of which I dare to dream the wildest dreams and then go all in to chase them; to my sister Piyari S. Paienjton for her unmatched courage, gumption and warm-heartedness; to my brother M. Haani Paienjton Jr. for his boundless patience, clear-sightedness and generosity of heart; to my sister-in-law Ayla Ahmed for her inimitable resolve, understanding and loving encouragement; and to my nephew Aydin Ali Paienjton for bringing us all unimaginable joy and pride since his arrival into this world six months ago. You are all roaringly inspiring and supportive. Thank you for helping me through yet another labour of love, this one for children on the move. A huge thanks also to very many members of my awesome extended family who have cheered me on throughout this work, especially my aunts Amana Riza and Nosrat Chamboulive, and my cousins Wasiqa Soni and Mohammad Ali Haider Qasuria. I am so blessed to have you all in my life.

As a ‘child’ on the move myself, having lived thousands of miles away from my biological family for almost twenty years, I have come to appreciate the magic of ecological families. Among these, the Pastorelli-Cunhas, Edin Elgsaether, Lena

Nguyen, Megan Crandell, Hannah Strohmeier and Magui O'Neill provided sincere encouragement at key moments during the course of this thesis. Thank you for understanding me as you do and for continuing to support me no matter the time and distance between us. I am so fortunate to have discovered you all while I have been on the move. And I have been once again blessed with a most wonderful ecological family in Ankara whose care and support made this academic journey a whole lot easier and much more enjoyable. Several members of this Ankara family I have already mentioned and thanked above. Additionally, I would like to thank my brilliant and incredibly supportive therapist and psychiatrist, as well as all the fabulous crew at Amelie's Garden where hundreds of hours were spent transcribing and writing. Your warm welcomes, plentiful hugs, delicious refreshments, and very genuine interest in my work were always extremely motivating. I would also like to thank Irmak Aydoğdu, Yüksel Erman and Fırat Duruşan for the coffee breaks, moral support and camaraderie during the writing process. Finally, I would like to thank Ilya Kazakov for repeatedly walking into Amelie's Garden for his "bir tavuk salatası" and eventually walking into my life too. You are my most unexpected and fortunate 'finding' from this time. Thank you for your endless support and encouragement, for pushing me whenever I need it most, for helping me grow like I haven't in decades, and for doing it all with infinite hugs and cups of tea. Thank you also for transforming my scribbled diagrams into brilliant graphics overnight so they could be included as beautiful figures in this thesis. And thank you for flying in from Riyadh to celebrate my thesis defence. Your indulgence and presence bring me indescribable comfort and joy.

Last but certainly not least, I am utterly grateful to the marvelous Urie Bronfenbrenner for his lifelong contributions to research and advocacy for children, and for his brilliant bioecological framework for human development which gave this study the direction it very much needed.

Thank you all. A lot.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the inclusion of refugee children alongside host communities in public preschools in Türkiye and its implications for social cohesion. According to the Directorate General of Migration Management (2023) of Türkiye, there were over 3.8 million refugees living in Türkiye in 2022, including over 3,500,000 Syrians Under Temporary Protection (UTP). Although these numbers have declined slightly since, as also acknowledged by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Türkiye remains as the country with the largest number of refugees in the world (UNHCR, 2023). While most of the refugees in Türkiye do not live in refugee camps and have settled alongside Turkish citizens in host communities all over the country, their integration into Turkish society has remained limited. There are many factors that could be contributing to this situation. As Celik and Icduygu (2019) point out, immigrant adaptation may have been complicated by an influx of people so massive and rapid that conventional assimilation and integration theories have not held up (Alba & Foner, 2015) or by inadequate institutional capacity to promote integration given the lack of prior experience with immigrants or refugees (Yildiz & Uzgoren, 2016). The relationships built in school can support or undermine social cohesion (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The state of social cohesion in the country is precarious. Tense sentiments about the refugee community have been observed among the host community (Erdemir, 2021) and Turkish media coverage of Syrians is dominated by negative stereotypes and prejudices (Nur Emin, 2016). According to the Social and Political Tendencies Survey conducted by the Centre of Turkish Studies of Kadir Has University (Aydın et al., 2019), 19.6% of respondents said they would not want a foreign national for a

neighbor and 45.8% said they would not want to talk to a refugee. In his Syrian Barometer of January 2018, Erdogan (2018) found that 75% of Turkish respondents did not agree that they can "live in peace with Syrians". This situation poses problems for the social and relational development of both Syrian and Turkish children since they attend common schools, but particularly for Syrian children as they are 'different' and may therefore find it more challenging to experience a sense of belonging (Kernan, 2010). At the same time, a desire for integration, in terms of learning the Turkish language and forging friendships with Turkish children, has also been observed (Erdemir, 2020), and some have argued that refugees tend to invest more in their integration process if they perceive the host context as welcoming (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). This suggests that attempts to address the social integration between the two communities would be well-founded.

Schools can play a critical role in addressing the aforementioned lack of integration. The Ministry of National Education in Türkiye has successfully enrolled 972,792 refugee children in public schools in Türkiye, including 45 per cent of all pre-primary age refugee children, and continues ambitious efforts to support school-age refugee children through catch-up classes, accelerated learning opportunities, vocational education, cash transfers for education and subsidized school transportation (3RP, 2023). These efforts notwithstanding, complaints of communication limitations, discriminatory behaviors and attitudes, bullying and negative stereotypes are commonplace among Syrian children attending Turkish schools and many admit feeling depressed, stigmatized and alienated (Celik & Icduygu, 2019). At the same time, Turkish families are also having to adapt to their children's classrooms accommodating Syrian children, with accounts from schools about aggression between children from the two communities and declining academic standards (Sahin & Sumer, 2018). These trends can be expected to shape negative attitudes towards Syrians among Turkish parents and their children. The daily lives of both refugee and host communities are therefore negatively affected.

Haraldsson et al. (2017) point out that interventions to enhance people's daily lives are "of great importance to the development and maintenance of mental health, from early childhood and throughout the lifespan" (Antonovsky, 1987; Eriksson & Lindstrom, 2008; Maggi et al., 2010 and Allen et al., 2014 in Haraldsson et al., 2017, p. 386) and

"should be made in the same context in which people live and work and should be built on their participation" (World Health Organization, 1986; Rootman et al., 2001 and World Health Organization, 2002, 2005 in Haraldsson et al., 2017, p. 386). They also point out that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that all children's right to good mental health (UN General Assembly, 1989), and that "mental health includes emotional, psychological and social well-being" (Keyes, 2007 in Haraldsson et al., p. 387). As the first place Turkish and Syrian children socialize with each other, public preschools can therefore be an ideal place for addressing the aforementioned challenges in Türkiye, especially considering the national Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum's emphasis on family involvement. Furthermore, young children are "keenly interested in difference" (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009, p. 195) and it is in early childhood education and care settings such as preschools that children's understandings of the groups to which they do and do not belong begin to develop (Vandenbroeck, 1999). Finally, preschools and relationships that children establish within preschools can also be considered a fundamental microsystem as per Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), shaping children's development and well-being.

Well-being includes "a sense of belonging to, and comfort and support from, a community" (Keyes, 2007, p. 98). In relation to schools, Libbey (2007) operationalizes the concept of belonging as when children "feel happy at school; feel like (they) get along with other children; feel like teachers care about (them); feel fairly treated and feel safe at school" (Libbey, 2007, p. 11). Furthermore, children who experience a sense of belonging at school are "more highly motivated and engaged in learning and committed to school" (Osterman, 2000, p. 359). Therefore, fostering a sense of belonging at school has the potential to enhance children's well-being as well as their academic performance.

For all these reasons, this research sought to examine in depth the state of social cohesion in a public preschool classroom with students from both Türkiye and Syria and to implement an intervention to support social relations between children from the two communities and their families. It was envisioned that such a process would allow the researcher to capture the voice and perspectives of participant children, their families and the teacher on their experiences of living in a diverse community and of

participating in the proposed intervention, which would contribute to establishing a better understanding of the challenges and informing relevant policymakers accordingly.

Jenson (2019) explains that the concept of social cohesion was first used by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who grappled with questions such as how society is created and what holds it together, but is at best, like social cohesion and inclusive growth, a quasi-concept. It enables engagement across widely varying policy communities, but lacks precision and attempts to define it result in either very specific or exceedingly general ideas. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition of a cohesive society is one "that works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity for upward mobility" (OECD, 2011). With regard to the intervention implemented in this study, the promotion of trust between host community and refugee families and the creation of a sense of belonging to the school community are perhaps the most relevant aspects of social cohesion.

Interventions to improve social cohesion through a preschool in culturally and linguistically diverse settings can focus on various underlying factors such as children's own self-concept and their concept of others, children's ability to see others' perspectives and to feel and practice empathy, and children's ability to perceive and navigate differences in a positive manner. Bibliotherapy, which was adapted and used in this research, is one such possible intervention. It is an intervention that uses books in a therapeutic process to provide insight into problems, to stimulate discussions about problems, to communicate new values and attitudes, to create an awareness that others have dealt with similar problems, and/or to provide solutions to problems (Baruth & Burggraf, 1984). There is already a precedent of bibliotherapy being used to address peer relations in school settings in Türkiye (Taneri et al., 2019). However, in line with the goal of the study to engage the families of children and to give agency to participant children and their families, an adaptation was introduced whereby a bilingual children's book series was co-developed with the participation of the children and their parents.

The main purpose of this study was to uncover the ways in which families from the refugee and host communities in Türkiye, particularly the children, are navigating social

opportunities in the context of a diverse preschool, as well as how they respond to the implementation of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention to enhance social relations at the preschool. The framing of the context in terms of 'social opportunities' for both communities is noteworthy. Türkiye is unique among the countries hosting the large influx of Syrian refugees since 2015 in the way it has incorporated refugee children, albeit gradually, into the public education system alongside its own citizens, such that they attend the same school and the same classes at the same times. Both Jordan and Lebanon, the other two countries hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, have introduced second shifts in public schools to accommodate refugee children into the national education system (Cortez et al., 2023; Cortez et al., 2023). While their approach addresses the children's educational needs, it does not give children from the host community and refugee community the opportunity to interact with each other, thereby also robbing them of the chance to get to know each other and develop social relationships. The uniqueness of the Turkish approach makes it even more important to study how it is being experienced by the people it serves.

1.2 Research Questions

Overall, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do children relate with each other socially in a diverse preschool classroom in Türkiye with half the children from the host community and half the children from the refugee community?
    a. How do children from the host community in Türkiye navigate interactions with their peers in such a preschool classroom?
    b. How to children from refugee community in Türkiye navigate interactions with their peers in such a preschool classroom?
2. How do parents of children attending a diverse preschool classroom with half the children from the host community and half the children from the refugee community in Türkiye navigate social relations in the context of school?
3. How do members of the school community respond to the implementation of an adapted bibliotherapy intervention in such a preschool classroom?
    a. How do children from the host community respond?
    b. How do children from the refugee community respond?

c. How do parents from the host community respond?
d. How do parents from the refugee community respond?
e. How does the teacher respond?
f. How does the principal respond?

4. What emerged as important practical considerations for the implementation of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention in such a preschool classroom?

1.3 Significance of the Study

Conceived as a pragmatic action research, whereby knowledge is generated through action and experimentation with local stakeholders (Levin & Greenwood, 2001; Boog, 2003), this study attempts to address several gaps in the field of refugee education. Firstly, through its practical or action component, it explores the potential of a two-tier intervention, involving both preschool children and their parents, to enhance intergroup relations in early childhood as recommended by Bouchane et al. (2018). As such, it also goes beyond the typically descriptive goals of studies about social cohesion in the displacement context. Secondly, by engaging both host and refugee communities in the effort to promote social cohesion, it acknowledges that both parties are affected by the new diversification in Turkish classrooms and that equally both parties have a role to play in ensuring it advances rather than undermines social cohesion. As pointed out by Erdal and Oeppen (2013), this kind of dual focus is also important to counter the expectation that refugees must assimilate and host communities need not change. Thirdly, the engagement of children and parents from refugee and host communities in the study also recognizes their agency and draws upon their individual and collective voices. Children's voices, in particular, have been found to be missing in the refugee education literature (Kilinc & Karsli-Calamak, 2022). Fourthly, this study examines the perspectives of all preschool stakeholders, including children, parents, teacher and principal, which is also reported as being rare in studies focusing on social cohesion or integration (Vrdoljak et al., 2022). These multiple perspectives will be invaluable in informing any replication efforts to improve social relations in other similar classrooms. Finally, as a result of the research, the first of two books in a children's book series capturing the lived experiences of children

living in displacement contexts are also available. For all these reasons, this study can be expected to make a useful contribution to the refugee education literature.

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

It would be useful to clarify the intended meaning of some of the key terms used in the study. These include:

Social cohesion: A condition of mutual trust between different members of society, whereby a sense of belonging is afforded to all members along with a concern for the wellbeing of all (OECD, 2011). In the context of this study, preschool children's preferences of friends and playmates were the most feasible concrete indicator which could be studied in the available setting and timeframe.

Intervention: A set of actions to address an identified problem. While originally used in the medical or clinical context, the term intervention is now also widely used in the fields of social policy and education. Sometimes termed social interventions, these entail actions intended to bring about social change. In the context of this study, intervention refers to the set of joint actions implemented by the researcher and teacher to promote empathy and friendship between children from the host and refugee communities in the class.

Bibliotherapy: The use of books to stimulate discussions about problems, communicate new values and attitudes, and/or provide insights and solutions to problems (Baruth & Burgraff, 1984). In the context of this study, two books are used, to provide children with insights and ideas for navigating diversity in the preschool and promote the values of empathy and friendship.

Adapted bibliotherapy: A bibliotherapy intervention with adjustments or adaptations to better fit the needs of the participants. In the context of this study, the second book *Khaled and Eren Visit the Seaside* was co-developed with the participation of children and parents from both host and refugee communities in order to give them voice in the discussion of diversity and cohesion in their social environment.

Contact hypothesis: In the theory of intergroup relations, the hypothesis that contact between members of two groups, whether it is direct, vicarious (more commonly

referred to as extended in the literature) or imagined, results, under certain enabling conditions, in more positive attitudes and behaviors towards the outgroup (Allport, 1954; Wright et al., 1997; Crisp & Turner, 2009). In the context of this study, host and refugee children attending the same preschool constitutes direct contact; host and refugee children reading books about a cross-group friendship between a Turkish child and a Syrian child constitutes extended or vicarious contact; and host and refugee families suggesting ideas for the continuation of the above-mentioned cross-group friendship constitutes imagined contact.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Refugee Education

Countries hosting refugees are faced with important decisions on how to provide access to education for all children. This is not only a matter of international commitments but also pragmatic social policy, since many of these children are stuck in protracted refugee situations that can last between ten and twenty-five years (Crawford et al., 2015; Milner & Loescher, 2011), naturally altering the social fabric of their host country in the process. Until 2012, refugee children in most settings were being educated in "parallel schools, separate from national students and often following the curriculum and language of instruction of the country of origin" (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018, p.7). However, in recent years, refugee children are increasingly educated via national educational systems, with the degree and evolution of this phenomenon varying from country to country based on "geography, history, resources and capacity" (UNESCO, 2019, p. xvii).

Empirical research on the inclusion of refugees in national education systems reveals three models of inclusion "shared space, geographically separate space, and temporally separate space" (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018, p.13), with the choice of model reflecting the policy milieu in the host country, the perceived duration of the conflict the refugees had fled, as well as the historical and contemporary relationships between countries of origin and the host country (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018). With regard to the implications of this inclusion of refugees into national education systems, while it does increase access of refugees to education, it also results in "challenges related to the quality of education broadly and to relational dimensions, including how refugees and nationals develop their own individual senses of belonging and well-being as well as broader social cohesion" (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018, p. 8). This is

a significant statement by the authors because it is one of the few instances of recognition in the refugee education literature that the sense of belonging and well-being of host community children, not just refugee children, is also affected by the inclusion of refugees in public schools. It is especially relevant for host countries that have seen a large and sudden influx of refugees.

In terms of the countries impacted by a large influx of Syrian refugees, we can say that Türkiye is implementing the shared space model of inclusion of refugees in the national education system (i.e. refugees and nationals are taught in the same classes at the same time) and Jordan is implementing the temporally separate model (i.e. refugees and nationals are taught in the same classes but in different shifts), while Lebanon initially adopted the shared space model but then switched to a temporally separate model.

Türkiye's response to the influx of Syrian refugees has also evolved over time. Initially adopting a parallel education system, whereby Syrian children were taught in temporary education centers[1] using the Syrian curriculum and Arabic medium of instruction (Karsli-Calamak, 2018), and then gradually transitioning into a shared space model of inclusion in the national system[2], whereby Syrian children in all grades were mandated to enroll in public schools over a period of four years starting from the 2016-2017 academic year. As pointed out by Karsli-Calamak and Kilinc (2019), this constitutes a dramatic change in terms of the increased diversity of students in public school classrooms, which should be examined and addressed.

Policy provisions specific to early childhood education for displaced children are rare in the world of refugee education, with Türkiye being one of the few countries where refugees can attend public preschools, and these measures have also been complemented by provision of ECE services by local NGOs such as Mother Child Education Foundation, Support to Life, Mavi Kalem Social Assistance and Solidarity and Yuva Foundation (UNESCO, 2019).

[1] As the name suggests, this was conceived as a short-term solution based on the assumption that the conflict in Syria would end soon and these children would resume education in their country of origin (Karsli-Calamak, 2018).

[2] This reflects a shift in the recognition of Syrian refugees from 'guests' to 'residents' in Türkiye's education policies (Tuna & Karsli, 2017).

2.2 Educational Interventions to Improve Social Cohesion

2.2.1 Social Cohesion and Education

The potential of education to foster social cohesion in displacement contexts is increasingly recognized. As highlighted in the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2019), good quality education can help refugees to adjust to new environments by "reducing the psychological toll of change and strengthening their sense of belonging in the host community" (p. 78). Importantly for refugee children, acquiring the local language through interaction with the host community children, including both verbal scripts as well as "the non-verbal socio-cultural scripts and practices that enable refugee learners to understand the 'rules of the game' in their host countries, the unspoken and often invisible social rules and norms that are not explicitly taught" (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018, p. 13), is critical for the development of that sense of belonging and navigating life in the host country. At the same time, by equipping host community students with critical thinking skills and an attitude of openness to different ways of being, thinking and doing, education can help them be more accepting of newcomers in their communities (UNESCO, 2019). As Barrett et al. (2013) point out, the cultural competences to interact appropriately with refugees must be taught. This applies equally to refugee students, and students from both communities can "learn skills to overcome fear of the unknown, engage constructively with different cultures and avoid simplistic overgeneralization" (UNESCO, 2019, p. 82). A dual focus on both refugee students and host community students is important to counter the expectation for newcomers to "integrate into host communities that need not change" (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013 in UNESCO, 2019, p. 84).

2.2.2 The Role of Public Schools in Fostering Social Cohesion

Jenson (2019) posits that the education sector is particularly well-placed to foster social cohesion because it teaches values and practices of living together in an integrated society. It also often has an agenda of instilling a common sense of identity, and this rings especially true of Turkish public schools since these have played a critical role in giving birth to a modern and secular Turkish identity for ethnically and religiously diverse peoples living in the country (Gok, 2007) and remain the 'most active status

apparatus' in this regard (Gok, 2002). With Syrian refugees having access to public schools in Türkiye, the education policy in Türkiye already provides interactions between hosts and refugees. The challenge now is how to go beyond this, perhaps in the way of schools in English cities, which as of 2007 have a new duty[3] of promoting community cohesion, the definition of which includes a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities, appreciation of all, and strong and positive relationships in schools (Jenson, 2019).

Similarly, Matthews (2008) suggests that schools can provide safe places and interactions with the host community, while Celik and Icduygu (2019) explain that schools now need to cater to children who speak different languages and have different motivations for staying. They argue that the institutional habitus of schools, or their coordinated practices or dispositional qualities a la Burke et al. (2013), by instilling motivations, manners, identities and future expectations in students, can influence the inclusionary or exclusionary experiences of Syrian refugee children (Celik & Icduygu, 2019).

Finally, Karsli-Calamak (2018), points out that there is an increasing recognition of the "role of schools in creating support mechanisms for refugee and immigrant families and children" (p. 44) and this is supported by a growing body of research (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 2005; Perry, 2010; Villenas, 2005; Kayumova et al., 2015).

2.2.3 Advantages of Using ECE Settings to Promote Social Cohesion

The Ministry of National Education in Türkiye is striving to make preschool education, specifically for five-year-olds, free and mandatory by the year 2023. This means that Kindergarten (or Anasınıfı, as it is called in Turkish) will soon become the first point of interaction for even more refugee and host community families than ever before. This alone merits that the preschools be given greater attention as a site for promoting social cohesion between host and refugee communities. However, there are also some other advantages.

[3] As per Jenson (2019), this new duty was assigned to schools 'directly and quickly' after the publication of the report Our Shared Future in 2006 by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion which was mandated to examine the situation of increasing diversity in England and to specifically develop community-centered approaches to prevent and manage tensions.

The first of these being the sensitivity and particularity of the early childhood period for a child's development. As Stratigos (2015) explains, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are learnt in the early years, with the risk that the child's innate need to belong may materialize in the rejection of other children (Woodhead & Brooker, 2008), and that factors such as language and ethnicity potentially determine inclusion and exclusion in early childhood education settings (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009). At the same time, play is the main preoccupation of children in the early years, and the "positive and prosocial nature of children's play is related to greater levels of peer acceptance and friendship formation and maintenance" (Coelho et al., 2017 in Stack & Nikiforidou, 2021, p. 847). Furthermore, Haraldsson et al. (2017) point out that resources for good mental health such as trust and self-worth, with the latter defined as "being able to rely on your own capacities and having a sense of belonging to a context" (p. 395), are best developed in the early years with the help of preschool teachers since young children spend most of their waking hours at preschool.

Another important advantage is that the ECE curriculum, at least in Türkiye, includes as one of its main principles the involvement of families in their children's school experience. This lends itself well to designing and deliver two-tier interventions, which reach both children and their parents children, through the preschool. Involving families seems particularly important in the case of addressing social cohesion since children might be substantially influenced by their parents in terms of their attitudes towards 'the other' community. Furthermore, McBrien (2011) points out that parent-school interaction is one of the significant determinants of school-centered integration of refugees and Karsli-Calamak (2018), citing Durand (2011) and Villenas (2005), explains the deficit perspective regarding the participation of refugee parents in schools whereby they are perceived as passive, are not fully and acknowledged, and thereby end up lacking a voice in school contexts. A social cohesion intervention involving the families of children at the preschool level would therefore not only be aligned with the principles of the national ECE curriculum but would also help refugee parents to break the glass ceiling early on with regard to participation in their children's school and this would in turn also improve their own integration into Turkish society, in addition to their children's.

2.2.4 Specific ECE Interventions for Improving Social Cohesion

Erdemir (2022) points out the dearth of empirical evidence on ECE interventions for children affected by displacement. My literature review ultimately led to the same conclusion. However, there are some recommendations and principles found in the refugee education literature that are relevant for ECE settings. For example, Bouchane et al. (2018) recommend attention to intergroup relations between refugees and host communities to prevent and address discrimination in early childhood. They argue that the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development, launched by the World Health Organization and UNICEF in 2018, can serve as a useful guide to reach young children in displacement contexts. This framework includes the provision of responsive care by adults in the form of guidance for children to navigate relationships with others, as well as early learning opportunities in the form of reading and story-telling with adults. Both of these elements were incorporated into the adapted bibliotherapy intervention for this study.

The concept of intercultural education (UNESCO, 2006) is also instructive for addressing social cohesion in diverse ECE settings. Interculturalism considers diversity as the norm rather than a special situation, and promotes appreciation of differences (UNESCO, 2019). Van Briel et al. (2016) found that curricula and textbooks have the potential to reduce prejudice and anxiety towards immigrants and foster a sense of belonging among them. Intercultural competences tend to be promoted by strong school leadership which allows for culturally-responsive curricular content and teaching approaches (Khalifa et al., 2016). Cooperative learning initiatives that establish common goals for children in the classroom, story-telling and role play activities are other ways to promote open-mindedness and positive cross-group interactions. Dryden-Peterson (2017) and Reddick and Dryden-Peterson (2018) also recommend storytelling in shared spaces to foster empathy and greater social cohesion between host and refugee communities.

The inclusion of storybooks from native cultures, in addition to read alouds in Turkish, was also a critical component of the adaptation of the Preschool Education Program (PEP)[4] to serve both local and refugee children in Türkiye (Erdemir, 2022).

[4] Developed by the Mother Child Education Foundation (ACEV) in the early 2000s to respond to the multilingualism prevailing in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia regions of Türkiye, the Preschool

Implemented through summer preschools, the PEP curriculum was found to nurture children's social and emotional skills, as well as foster a sense of belonging to "a safe, secure and reassuring classroom community where the linguistic and cultural diversities among children were reflected in the curriculum and the bilingualism of teachers" (Erdemir, 2022, p. 931). As per Earnest et al. (2015) and Yohani et al. (2019), these gains could be expected to promote social cohesion between children from the host and refugee communities. While the summer preschools filled a much-needed gap for young children affected by displacement in Türkiye, Erdemir (2022) notes the lack of parent engagement as a limitation for the sustainability of gains, and also points out that the curriculum had to be administered in separate classrooms for refugee children and host community children due to the complexities of managing language differences with young children. These are both instructive lessons for the current study.

2.2.5 Adapted Bibliotherapy to Improve Social Cohesion

Sumison and Wong (2011) advocate for rigorous development of belonging in ECE settings, underlining its potential for radical transformations and building a more socially just society. Erdemir (2020) emphasizes the need for strength-based narratives of refugee children and for giving them a voice in early childhood research. The latter is also reiterated by Kilinc and Karsli (2021) who imply that refugee children's voices are being eclipsed by educators' perspectives in the literature. The design of this research project, including the implemented intervention, was driven in large part to address these gaps such that Syrian and Turkish children would appreciate their own and each other's belonging in Turkish public preschools, would see each other in a more positive light and would have their voices registered in social cohesion research and interventions.

Precedence was found for social cohesion interventions aimed at children in countries hosting Syrian refugees including Lebanon and Türkiye based on these principles, but they catered to children above the age of 6, and were not implemented in mixed settings of both host and refugee participants, at least in Türkiye (International Alert, 2016).

Education Program (PEP) is a skills-based curriculum enriched with mother-tongue content. (Erdemir, 2022)

However, the focus of the interventions, i.e. building respect for diversity, promoting agency and providing avenues for action which benefited the wider community, was of relevance for this study, as were some of the lessons documented, such as the necessity to adapt interventions for younger children and the interest expressed by parents for their own involvement.

Precedence was also found for interventions to address poor social relations between children in Turkish schools, e.g. the use of bibliotherapy to address peer bullying (Taneri et al., 2019). Bibliotherapy is alternatively defined as the use of books in a therapeutic process (Baker, 1987; Kubovi, 1992); the use of books to help people solve problems (Aiex, 1993); or the sharing of stories with the intention of helping an individual or group gain insight into their own problems (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1997). In addition to providing insight and solutions to problems, the goals of bibliotherapy can include creating awareness that others have dealt with similar problems, stimulating discussion about problems and communicating new values and attitudes (Baruth & Burggraff, 1984). As explained by Jack and Ronan (2008), there is a long and rich history of using bibliotherapy to affect individual attitudes and behaviors. The term 'bibliotherapeutic process' was originally used during World War 1 to refer to the reading and discussion of fiction and non-fiction books to address conditions such as unemployment-induced depression among adults (Crothers, 1916, as cited in Jack & Ronan, 2008), and was widely used in military hospitals during that time to ease the hardship of patients (McDaniel, 1956). It went on to become an adjunct treatment program systematically operationalized as a collaboration between physicians and librarians in the following decades (Menninger, 1937), and eventually, by the 1950s and 1960s, as a practice increasingly used in various settings by various types of practitioners such as psychologists, social workers and educators (Tews, 1970).

Since then the intended use of bibliotherapy in school settings, as documented by Lutovac and Kaasila (2020) and Jack and Ronan (2008), has ranged from addressing anxieties associated with beginning school (Rich & Bernstein, 1975), development of children's social skills, (Lekowsky, 1987; Anderson, 2000; Sullivan & Strang, 2002), to addressing the needs of gifted students (Schlicter & Burke, 1994), to develop interpersonal competence to supporting children to cope with fears (Nicholson & Pearson, 2003), to creating inclusive classrooms (Iaquinta & Hipsky, 2006), to

reducing aggression (Shectman & Tutian, 2016). Heath et al. (2005) posit that bibliotherapy can be used in schools to support children with difficulties such as adjusting to the birth of a new sibling, coping with divorce of parents, as well as making and keeping friends, while Eisenman and Harper (2016) present bibliotherapy as a strategy for classroom management whereby teachers can engage in whole group read alouds to discuss issues that affect most or all students in the class. Given the setting and nature of participants and problems focused on, all these uses of bibliotherapy would be classified as 'developmental bibliotherapy' which is distinct from 'clinical bibliotherapy' or 'institutional bibliotherapy' and does not require the presence of a therapist or counselor (Rubin, 1978). The bibliotherapy intervention attempted in this study was also developmental one, implemented by the teacher and researcher.

In the field of education, literature has long been linked to teaching moral values (Almerico, 2014), as well as shaping character, affecting people and helping them rethink (Smith, 2002), while the practice of reading aloud in preschools often has a language and literacy focus, designed to help develop children's vocabulary and listening comprehension skills (Otto, 1991). What distinguishes developmental bibliotherapy from these other reading activities is the selection of literature and the three stages of the bibliotherapeutic process. Teachers know and understand their students' specific needs and use developmental bibliotherapy as a proactive approach to address students' behaviors with regard to specific situations, carefully selecting literature, in consultation with a librarian if necessary, that would resonate with them (Cook et al., 2006). Additionally, students should experience the three important stages of the bibliotherapeutic process, which include 1) identification or relating with the characters in the story, 2) catharsis or emotional release as a result of the story, and 3) insight or the realization that the story resembles their own situation and offers alternative interpretations or solutions to the problems they face in their own lives (Afolayan, 1992). Another important element of the bibliotherapeutic process is discussion. Reading without discussion is not considered bibliotherapy (Rubin, 1979) and unlikely to be as effective (Orton, 1997). In addition to focused discussion, reinforcement activities or follow-up techniques such as art and music activities may be used by teachers to enhance effectiveness (Eisenman & Harper, 2016; Morawski & Gilbert, 2000).

The potential of bibliotherapy to achieve emotional and behavioral change has been documented in both qualitative and quantitative analyses, with positive effect sizes ranging from 0.57 to 0.96 (Jack & Ronan, 2008). Furthermore, reading of literature also presents the opportunity to express the unexpressed (Iser, 1993), which in the context of social tensions is extremely useful, and even though the teacher would be the one reading aloud in the kindergarten context since 5-year-olds cannot typically read picturebooks by themselves, the children can be expected to "dwell on the text and construct meanings in their convergence with it" (Pramling et al., 2003, p. 381). Bibliotherapy is considered a non-intrusive method (Mohr et al., 1991) and a child-friendly technique (Sullivan & Strang, 2002) which can stimulate discussions about sensitive situations that might otherwise be characterized by fear, guilt or shame (Gottschalk, 1948). Cook et al. (2006), noting the increasing diversity of classrooms, assert that bibliotherapy, by taking away the fear of differences, has the potential encourage to children to adopt more inclusive attitudes and behaviors towards peers.

Although all bibliotherapists recognize the power of books or written words, differences exist in the type of books used and the way they are used (Nurit & Zipora, 2010). The process itself can be a major mechanism of change and any written material that can inform, educate, or guide individuals may be used (Tallman & Bohart, 1999). For the purpose of this study, it was envisaged that a story of a Syrian refugee child and Turkish child becoming friends would be developed and used to initiate a process of fostering greater understanding. Proponents of cognitive bibliotherapy place less importance on therapist interventions, often using self-help books with no therapist intervention at all (Glasgow & Rosen, 1978). For the purpose of this research, the idea was to work without a therapist within the framework of the existing ECE curriculum, i.e. teacher reading to children in the class and then writing to parents about their engagement in the activity. The families' engagement in the activity constituted the main adaptation in the intervention. Parents were asked to read the story again with the children at home and discuss possible ideas for the continuation of the story. They were asked to send these ideas to the teacher and a second book was created by using these ideas and then read with the children. This adaptation of the intervention was designed to address some of the assertions in the literature mentioned earlier, e.g. parents expressing a desire to be involved in social cohesion interventions, parents being central to school-based adaptation etc. Additionally, acts of collaboration have been

shown to be associated with pro-social behaviors such as sharing, helping and showing of patience (Grafenhain et al., 2013). As such the co-writing of the second book by Turkish and Syrian families could be expected to help establish more positive relations between them.

As for the development of the book to initiate the adapted bibliotherapy intervention, the scientific literature in the fields of early childhood education and social cohesion also offered some guidance. For example, Taylor and Sidhu (2012), recommended promoting a positive image of refugee students, and Greenwood and Kelley (2020) found that "the concept of a sense of school belonging is embodied in relationships" (p. 753). This suggested that a book featuring a Syrian child in an unambiguously positive role and a friendship between him/her and a Turkish child in a school setting could be important for constructing positive attitudes and a sense of belonging among participant children. All this would be particularly effective if the children can identify with the protagonists in the book (Sever, 1995) who can then serve as positive references for them (Mardi, 2006). A protagonist that children are able to see as a friend also has the potential to help them understand people and society (Erdem, 2011) and gain insight into problems that he/she might face and how to behave when such problems arise (Kiritoglu, 2011). Benefitting from all this guidance, a book called "Khaled and Eren Become Friends" was developed for the research and the description of it in the Methodology chapter includes the ways in which the above principles were applied in order to maximize convergence, a la Pramling et al. (2003), with participant children in the hope of changing attitudes and behaviors.

Finally, fostering feelings of belonging is crucial to the intervention to be implemented in this project. Haraldsson et al. (2017) are instructive in their mention and use of the 'positive peer group' and 'commitment to activities' as subcategories of the concept of belonging, describing the former as children being able to engage in different play activities with different children, and the latter as children and parents participating in preschool such that they feel that preschool is intended for them. As per these descriptions, they provide support for our adapted bibliotherapy intervention, whereby the content of the first book is intended to facilitate access to positive peer groups and the co-creation of the second book is intended to foster commitment in activities, and the adapted bibliotherapy intervention designed for this study would this appear to be

fit-for-purpose to achieve the overall goals of belonging and more positive relations for children from the host and refugee communities.

2.3 Conceptual Frameworks

This study is guided by three theoretical frameworks. First, the intergroup relations literature from social psychology lends a series of important concepts for not only unpacking the various types of intergroup contact accessible to preschool children and parents from host and refugee communities in this study, i.e. direct contact, extended or vicarious contact, and imagined contact, but also for understanding the various transformative pathways through which intergroup contact can lead to more positive intergroup attitudes and behaviors. Second, the bioecological theory of human development from the developmental psychology literature provides a useful framework for understanding more holistically how children from the two communities navigate social relations with peers in the context of their environments while also exerting their own influence on the environment and on various factors within the environment, including the adapted bibliotherapy intervention implemented in this study. Finally, the ecologies of parent engagement from the education literature provides a similarly useful framework for understanding how parents from the two communities interact with the school and the intervention. Each of these theoretical frameworks is described in more detail below.

2.3.1 Intergroup Contact Theories and Models

Based on his work with refugees from World War II, the social psychologist Gordon Allport proposed that direct contact between different groups can, under the right social conditions, lead to reduced prejudice and improved intergroup relations (Allport, 1954). Termed as the Contact Hypothesis in the study of intergroup relations, this idea has since been extensively researched and validated in various contexts (Oskamp & Jones, 2000; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), including in the field of elementary education. Acknowledging that the hypothesis has been the subject of important theoretical and empirical developments over a period of fifty years, including various tests and accounts of how, when and why contact between members of different groups leads to reduced prejudice and improved social relations, Brown

and Hewstone (2005) contend that these could be reconciled into an integrative theory of intergroup contact. In the subsequent paragraphs, I shall attempt to summarize the main components of such a theory, as well as extensions of the theory to the ideas of extended or vicarious contact and imagined contact.

Allport's original hypothesis was that social conditions characterized by cooperation, common goals, equal social status and institutional support facilitated reductions in prejudice (Crisp & Turner, 2009). Newer theories of intergroup contact have focused on different possible underlying mechanisms for how and when contact with members of an outgroup might induce more positive attitudes and behaviors towards outgroup members. Most prominent among these are 1) decategorization, 2) common ingroup identity, 3) dual identity, and 4) intergroup contact models, each of which is described below and their relevance for the current study is also indicated.

The decategorization model of contact

The decategorization model of contact, put forward by Brewer and Miller (1984), suggests that direct contact between members of different groups, if characterized by greater personalization or individuation, results in deemphasis of category memberships and a promotion of perceptions of people as individuals rather than belonging to a group (Cameron et al., 2006). This renders ingroup-outgroup distinctions useless for organizing perceptions about members of outgroups or ingroup and also attitudes and behaviors towards them (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). The implication is that the natural human tendency to favor ingroup over outgroup, explained by some as an evolutionary strategy for basic survival, can be tempered down through decategorized forms of contact where the salience of group memberships is downplayed or even eliminated. In the case of the current study, this would mean examining the extent to which refugee and host community memberships are attended to by the participants.

The common ingroup identity model of contact

The common ingroup identity model of contact, proposed by Gaertner et al. (1989), argues for contact situations characterized by the formation of new, more inclusive identities such that former outgroup members are extended the positive pro-ingroup

biases previously favoring only members of one's old, more exclusive group. This encourages perceptions of 'us' over 'we' and 'them' (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) and is resonant of Allport's insinuation to re-draw the boundaries of social categorization from race to humankind (Houlette et al., 2004). Applied to the current study, this model has great relevance for the extent to which a common preschool membership encourages members of the refugee community and host community to extend positive attitudes and behaviors towards each other.

The dual identity model of contact

The dual identity model of contact, also proposed by Gaertner at al. (1993), is an extension of the common ingroup identity model, whereby salience of sub-groups is maintained while emphasizing a more inclusive superordinate identity. Brown and Hewstone (2005) contend that it is a more preferable approach, especially in majority-minority settings, since it does not require people to relinquish their existing identities as they adopt a new superordinate identity. Applied to the current study, this would be operationalized as the extent to which members of the preschool community maintain their subgroup identities as refugees and host community while adopting a superordinate identity associated with the children attending a particular preschool.

The intergroup contact model

The intergroup contact model, previously known as the mutual intergroup differentiation model, was put forward by Hewstone & Brown (1986). In contrast with the decategorization and recategorization models described above, this model emphasizes the original group salience such that the individuals in the contact situations must be seen as representing their respective groups to some extent in order for the positive outcomes of contact to be generalized to intergroup relations more widely (Brown & Hewstone, 2005). In the current study, this is relevant for instances of positive contact between specific members of the host community and the refugee community within the preschool, and the extent to which the experience is then generalized by members to intergroup relations concerning other outgroup members, within and outside the preschool.

The extensive theoretical and empirical engagement with the contact hypothesis since the 1980s has led to the generation of a substantial evidence base on the potential of direct contact to reduce prejudice and promote positive attitudes toward outgroups. In particular, the role of cross-group friendships has emerged as particularly strong in this regard, much more so than cross-group interactions as co-workers and neighbors, and the causal direction from friendship to lower prejudice, rather than vice versa, has also been documented (Pettigrew, 1997). These achievements notwithstanding, there is also an acknowledgment in the literature that intergroup anxiety, in the form of discomfort or fear of appearing intolerant or other negative emotions, can prevent or undermine the potential benefits of direct contact through an increased "likelihood of self-censorship, misattribution and stereotype confirmation (Bodenhausen, 1993; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Wilder, 1993)" (Wright et al., 1997). This risk, along with the practical reality that not everyone has the opportunity to engage in a cross-group friendship, led to the emergence of the theories of extended or vicarious contact and imagined contact, both of which I will now also describe, along with their relevance for the current study.

The extended contact hypothesis

The extended contact hypothesis, put forward by Wright et al. (1997), proposes that simply the knowledge of a close relationship between an ingroup member and outgroup member can result in more positive intergroup attitudes. Based on a very thorough review of the literature on intergroup relations, Wright et al. (1997) identified three main mechanisms through which the extended contact hypothesis transpires. The first is called *positive ingroup exemplar* and pertains to the influence of ingroup members, when perceived as being interchangeable with the self, to establish within the ingroup the norms of tolerance, reduced anxiety about cross-group interaction and reduced ignorance about the subjective culture of the outgroup. The second is called *positive outgroup exemplar* and has to do with the behavior of outgroup members as sources of information on outgroup norms regarding intergroup relations as well as the validity of negative stereotypes. Finally, the third is called *including other in the self* and pertains to dissolution of distinctions between ingroup and outgroup due to observing a cross-group friendship and thereby undermining any negative attitudes that might have been held towards the outgroup. In the context of the current study,

the extended contact hypothesis and its underlying mechanisms are relevant not just for examining how cross-group friendships within the preschool community may influence attitudes towards the outgroup and towards intergroup relations among other preschool members, but also how reading a story about a new friendship between a refugee child and host community child might influence these attitudes.

The imagined contact hypothesis

Building on the extended contact hypothesis and its underlying mechanisms, Crisp and Turner (2009) propose that imagined contact or mental simulation of an intergroup social interaction could also similarly enhance intergroup attitudes and behaviors. Encouraged by preliminary evidence on the potential positive impact of imagined contact (Turner et al., 2007; Stathi & Crisp; 2008), they predict that it could break inhibitions, encourage people to seek intergroup contact and navigate such contact with a more open mind. For these reasons, they suggest that imagined contact might serve as an effective first step prior to extended contact or direct contact. In the context of the current study, families were asked to imagine what happens next after the refugee protagonist and host community protagonist in a children's picturebook become friends, i.e. they were asked to imagine an extended narrative of an extended contact. How they respond to this request can be analyzed in terms of the theory of imagined intergroup contact.

Figure 1 below presents a visual summary of the above concepts and how they foreground this study. The overall purpose of this study is to examine intergroup relations at a public preschool in Ankara and how these relations might be enhanced. The preschool itself is an opportunity for direct contact for members of the refugee and host communities, while the adapted bibliotherapy intervention provides opportunities for extended contact and imagined contact. As such, all the various concepts of intergroup contact theory are relevant and will be used as a lens to analyze the experiences shared by participants or observed by the researcher.

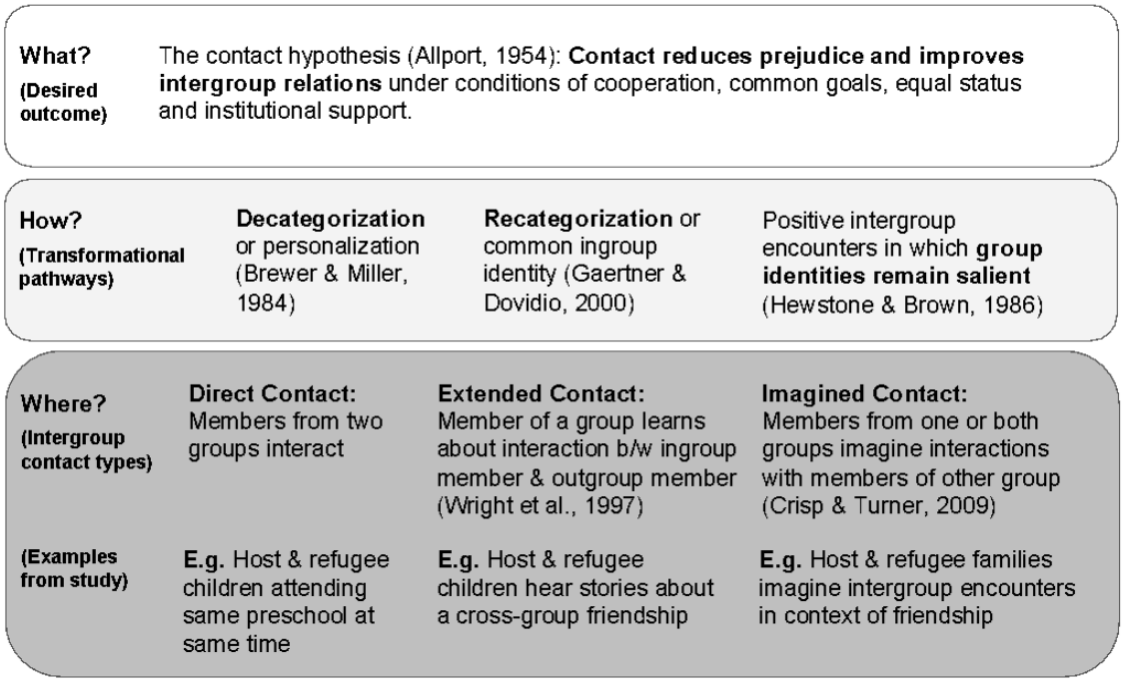


Figure 1. *An integrative theory of intergroup relations*

There is precedence for intergroup contact models being used for examining and improving intergroup relations of children in elementary school. Examples include Houlette et al's (2004) study in which a common ingroup identity intervention was implemented with first and second graders and then their biases towards children different from themselves were examined, as well as Cameron et al's (2006) study in which the attitudes of British children, aged 5-11 years, towards refugees were tested using various models of extended contact. As a qualitative endeavor, the current study lends itself well to unpack the important how's and why's in the field of intergroup relations, not just for preschool-age children but also their parents.

2.3.2 The Bioecological Theory of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner (1974) urged researchers to study human beings in naturalistic settings so that their findings would be more ecologically valid and could better inform social policy. His ecological framework was designed to serve this purpose and is therefore a fitting guide for this study as it was conducted in the naturalistic setting of a public preschool and aims to inform policies and programs for improving social cohesion

between host and refugee communities. Bronfenbrenner's description of the ecology of human development as "progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21) is apt for examining the social development of preschoolers entering school and interacting with outgroup peers for the first time. Bronfenbrenner himself studied the development of children's peer groups and friendship patterns for his doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan in 1942 (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

The bioecological framework has been used extensively in the field of education research, including for studies on literacy development and school readiness in early childhood (Jaeger, 2016; Tudge et al., 2003), as well as for research on peace education (Tomovska, 2010), children with special needs (McLinden et al., 2017; Crawford et al., 2020) and families experiencing adversities (Swick & Williams, 2006; Olofson, 2017). It is also increasingly used as an analytical and organizational framework to advocate for best practices in refugee education (Anderson et al., 2004; Stewart, 2011). The government of Manitoba province in Canada, for example, uses Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory to justify a whole-school approach to supporting refugee students, whereby it is recognized that "a complex set of relationships" influences any child's "behaviour, personality, acculturation and adjustment" (Government of Manitoba, 2012, p. 64) and it is therefore important for the school to work with the local community to ensure better development outcomes for children and more inclusive societies. Bronfenbrenner (1986) also advocated for schools to take a leading role in ensuring a sense of belonging or connectedness for children by linking up with their families and communities, creating a shared sense of identity and values, implementing a curriculum of caring and engaging mentors for children.

The main elements of the bioecological framework includes a set of nested structures in which the child is embedded, i.e. the macrosystem, mesosystem, exosystems and microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), as well as the biological factors or instigative characteristics of the child which influence their interactions with their environment or lack thereof, such as their temperament (e.g. calm or fussy) and their external orientation (e.g. inviting or avoidant) (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1993). The main thrust of the theory, at its most refined state towards the end of

Bronfenbrenner's life, is that these nested structures and personal characteristics come into play during proximal processes, defined as "progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects and symbols in its immediate environment" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p.797), to determine human development outcomes.

It is important to note the bidirectionality of the influence, whereby the child, through their instigative characteristics as well as the nature of their interaction with the persons, objects and symbols in their environment, is an active agent in current and future proximal processes and hence in their own development and the development of those they interact with, including adults. It is also important to note that the interaction comprising a proximal process could be with another person or with an object or symbol in their immediate environment, suggesting not only that solitary activities by children can influence their development but also that objects and symbols can promote this development.

The latter was a refinement upon the theory's earlier focus on activities, relations and roles in the microsystem, and lends itself better to guiding the current study since the adapted bibliotherapy intervention entails children's interactions with objects (e.g. picturebooks) and symbols (e.g. Arabic and Turkish). Another significant refinement to the theory for the purposes of this study, once the Process-Person-Context-Time model was developed by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) as an empirical tool to guide the operationalization of the theory for research on human development in natural settings, was an elaboration of the person characteristics that affect the child's development. These include 1) active behavioral dispositions of either generative nature (e.g. curiosity or responsiveness) or disruptive nature (e.g. impulsiveness or distractibility); 2) characteristics that invite or discourage reactions from the social environment (e.g. knowledge, skill or experience); and 3) biopsychological liabilities and assets (e.g. physical attractiveness, temperament, race or gender) that influence the capacity of the child to engage effectively in proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 810-812).

In the context of this study, the proximal processes of interest are interactions between host community children and refugee children in the school context, as well as how

children and parents interact with the activities, objects and symbols related to the implementation of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention in their classroom. The children's behavioral dispositions and resource characteristics (i.e. knowledge, skills and experience) can be expected to influence their own and others' social experiences and development, in addition to their host or refugee status, or more precisely their nationality or ethnicity as per their primary language. The developmental outcomes of interest are cross-group friendships and play patterns, as well as any cross-group tensions or conflict in the classroom that might exist. Figure 2 below summarizes how the different elements of this study map onto the bioecological framework of human development.

The inherent bidirectionality and dynamic nature of the bioecological theory lend credence to the notion that a public preschool intervention to improve social cohesion has the potential to change the environment in which host community children and refugee children grow and learn. This is in contrast with previous models of child development, which according to Bronfenbrenner (1974), portrayed children's environments as "sociological givens rather than as structural elements that are modifiable" (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, p. 4). Furthermore, the engagement of families in the intervention and the study is consistent with the notion that children's various microsystems of home and school, and the intersectionality of these or their mesosystem, are important influences on their attitudes and behavior towards members of the other community. At the same time, families' or parents' own attitudes and behaviors in this regard may be shaped by exosystems such as their work places or displacement trajectory, as well as how displacement continues to affect them via macrosystem elements such as refugee policies, livelihoods or social assistance programs, cost of living etc. Figure 2 below is an adapted version of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model for this study, with the addition of nanosystems proposed by Stewart (2011) to detail subsystems of influence within microsystems which emerged from her work with refugee youth. In this study, nanosystems are used to refer to specific peer-to-peer relationships. Any given microsystem can have one or more nanosystems in which the child partakes.

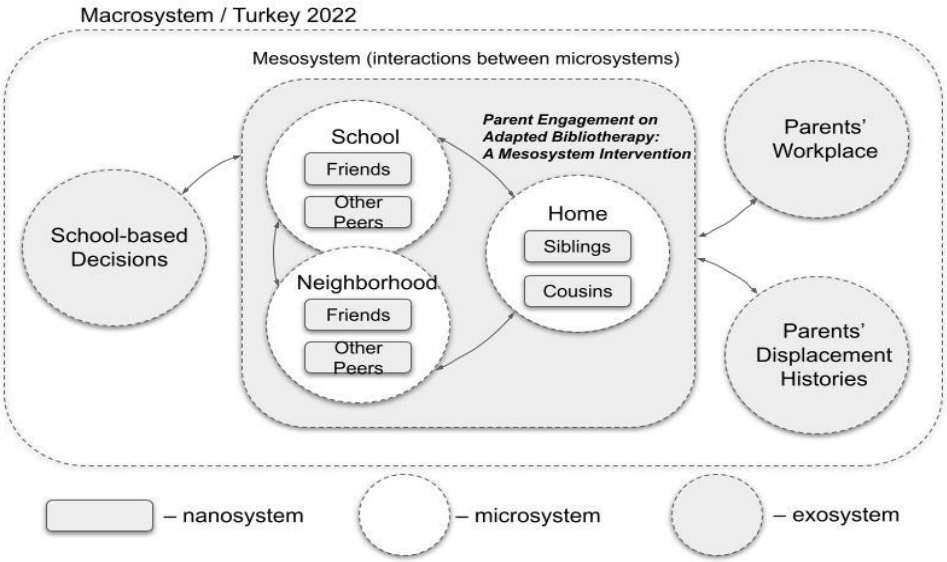


Figure 2. *Adapted ecological theory model for the study*

2.3.3 The Ecologies of Parental Engagement Framework

The Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE) Framework has been used in this study to understand parental engagement with regard to intergroup relations in the preschool context, including their engagement with the intervention implemented to improve these relations. As it was an important goal of this study to give voice to refugee parents and host community parents on their experiences of navigating a diverse preschool community, the empowering nature of the EPE framework made it an ideal tool for conducting the analysis.

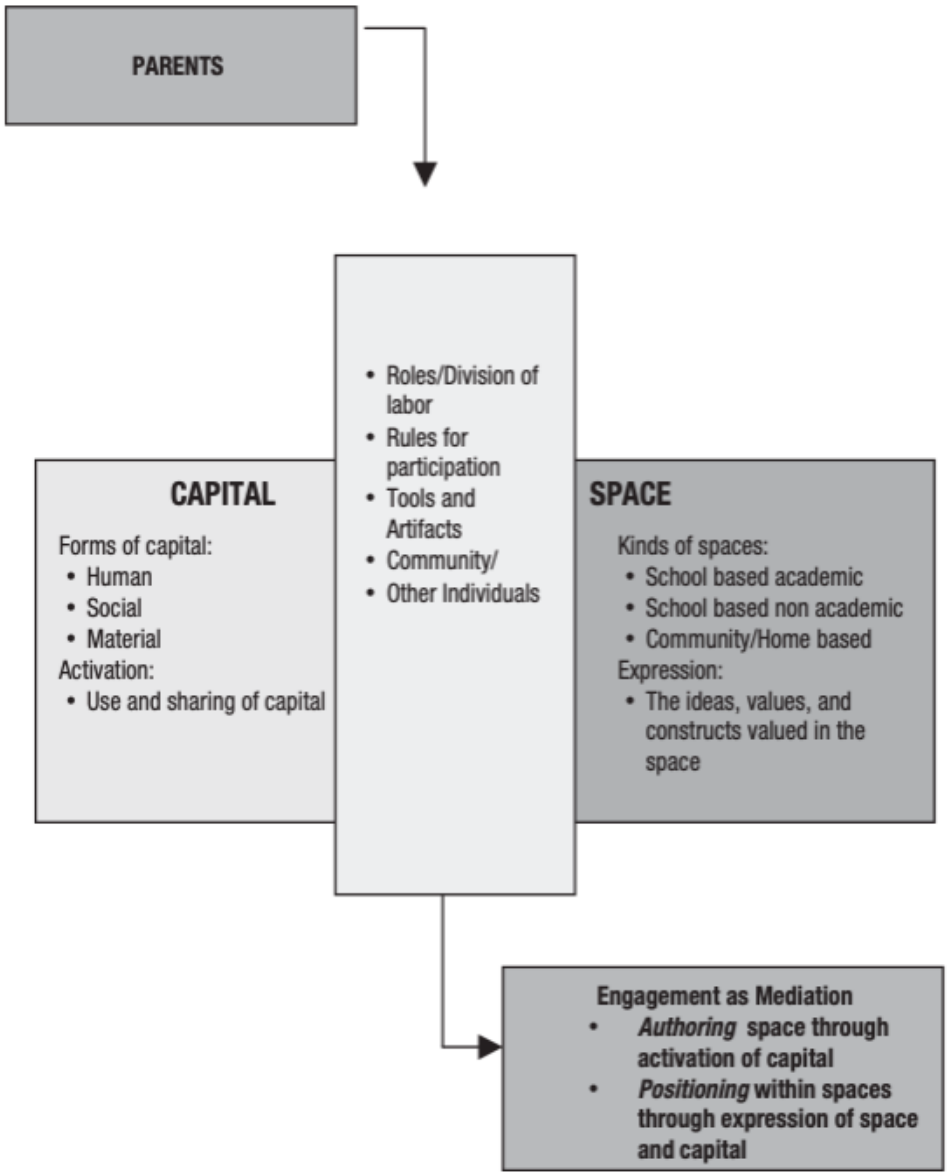
Conceived by Calabrese Barton et al. (2004), the EPE framework emerged from their research on parent involvement in education in high-poverty urban settings, which also makes it particularly suitable for this study which was implemented in a very similar setting in the Altindag district of Ankara. The framework is based on the researchers' observations that parents engage in their children's education and their scholastic lives in much more varied and sophisticated ways than simply responding to the school's expectations of how they should be involved in their child's education to meet the goals of the school. These conventional strategies of parent involvement in schools have been criticized for being outdated and inadequate for transformative change, especially with the inclusion of nondominant communities into school systems

(Ishimaru, 2019). Diverse parent populations call for new, more equitable ways to engage parents as well as to understand their engagement. As such, the EPE framework recognizes parent engagement as a "dynamic, interactive process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with schools" (Calabrese Barton et al, 2004, p. 3).

According to the EPE framework, parent engagement is a mediation of space and capital. In this framework, space is conceptualized as sites within which culture is produced, and can be school-based or home-based, academic or non-academic. The ideas, values and constructs valued in any given space are also important factors for parent engagement, and would ideally be shaped with the participation of parents. Capital refers to the resources activated by parents to participate in any space, and these could be in the form of human capital, social capital or material resources. It is through activation of capital that parents manage to create or accept opportunities to be involved in the school. A parent's decision to participate in a space or event, the situations or contexts that surround that decision, how the parents participate (i.e. what they actually do) and the orientations which frame these actions are all key elements of the ecologies of engagement. Within this ecology, engagement transpires through two actions by the parents: authoring and positioning. Authoring refers to how parents mobilize resources available to author a place of their own in the school, while positioning refers to how they use or express that place to position themselves to have influence in the school.

As such, all preschool parents cannot be expected to engage in the same way and it is equally important for school actors to listen and be responsive to what parents express with regard to their desires for what transpires in schools.

Figure 3 below summarizes the EPE framework. Although not specific to the engagement of refugee parents, there is a precedence for the EPE framework to be invoked in the refugee education literature (Karsli-Calamak, 2018), and this study will take that a step further by applying it to parent engagement in a home-based space in order to improve social cohesion between the refugee community and the host community.



(Calabrese Barton et al. 2004:7)

Figure 3. *Ecologies of parent engagement*

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research project was to examine the state of social cohesion between host and refugee families in a Turkish public preschool and to document their perspectives on the implementation of an intervention to improve social cohesion through public preschools. Since the aim was to learn about the views of individuals and assess a process over time, a qualitative approach was deemed most suitable. This approach would allow us to draw out and articulate how they experience their school community and find solutions for the problems they are facing. Giving voice to participants, specifically Syrian and Turkish families affected by the conflict in Syria and the resulting displacement of people to Türkiye, was also a key goal of this research and only possible through a qualitative approach. The study was therefore envisioned as a qualitative research that is equally exploratory, descriptive and emancipatory, with some possibility of detecting explanations in the process.

3.1 Research Design

The study was originally conceived as a pragmatic action research. According to Levin and Greenwood (2001), this has two central parameters: 'knowledge generation through action and experimentation' and 'the role of participatory democracy'. As documented by Boog (2003), it entails a knowledge construction process that "involves both researchers and local stakeholders in the same learning-action process, thereby fulfilling both a participative democratic ideal and achieving knowledge generation through learning from action." The implementation of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention in a classroom, with the participation of the teacher, children and their parents, and its documentation by the researcher aligns well with all these parameters. The co-creation of the second book with the children and parents is

an action than can help create knowledge about their experiences and aspirations with regard to intergroup relations. Greenwood (2007) argues that pragmatic action research is a set of strategies that draws on various methods and techniques to help research participants to "clarify their goals and organize themselves in such a way that these goals could be accomplished for the benefit of a broad cross-section of the stakeholder group" (p.146). This study used the adapted bibliotherapy method and a case study approach to help preschool children and parents identify their goals with regard to intergroup relations as well as the roles they can play themselves and the support they need from the school to achieve these goals.

The children's co-participation in this research is central to its design. While children participating in research is not a particularly novel concept (Kellet, 2010), the last few decades have indeed seen an increasing use of a child-centered perspective which is called as 'new social studies of childhood' (James et al., 1998). There is a recognition that children's interests and opinions may diverge from their parents' (Brooker, 2001) and new methodologies can bring new understandings to children's perception of social and political issues (Bucknall, 2012). Acknowledging children's agency entails accepting their role and influence in society, including in the development of social relationships and norms (James, 2013). Their capacity to participate in society can be nurtured through innovative ways to empower them (Kellet, 2011). Erdiller-Yatmaz et al. (2022) underscore the importance of acknowledging and nurturing children's agency in various dimensions of their lives, and demonstrate the empowering potential of not just creating space in research design to elicit children's voices but also augmenting their influence and facilitating access to an audience. In a similar vein, the current study takes a social constructivist approach whereby study participants, including children, are assumed to interact with a socially constructed environment, which they themselves contribute to shaping, and in which they experience realities formed by their own experience (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). More specifically, it attempts to understand and describe realities which are important to the participants, especially children.

Finally, given the aim of the study to inform practice, i.e. social cohesion interventions in refugee education, and its focus of on a single issue within a bounded system, i.e. social cohesion between refugee and host communities in the context of a public

preschool with half the children from the refugee community and half the children from the host community, an instrumental case study approach was considered most suitable to examine the issue as per the guidance of Pellegrini (2013) and Yin (2003). As such, data was collected from multiple sources, including semi-structured interviews with children, their parents, teacher and school principal, as well as in-class observations by the researcher. All these data, along with children's drawings and the story inputs sent by the parents, were used to construct a holistic account of the state of social cohesion among the classroom community, their convergence with the intervention implemented and lessons learned during the implementation.

3.2 Research Context

Study location

The study was conducted in one of the two kindergarten classes in a public preschool in the Altindag district of Ankara. It was conducted in Ankara because this is where the researcher resides and studies, however, Ankara is also the capital city and among the top 10 cities where refugees reside in Türkiye and is home to over 90,000 Syrians UTP (DGMM, 2023). This allowed for a purposeful selection of the case, specifically a diverse preschool class, whereby the selected participants would have the necessary characteristics and experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Identification of the case

The process of identifying the case and participants was as follows: Initially a call for interest was issued to ECE teachers using a professional social media account, but only one teacher responded and she had only one Syrian/refugee student in her class. Due to low interest among teachers on social media, principals of elementary schools in Altindag district were contacted by phone to inquire about their interest in the project. The focus on Altindag district was driven by the high numbers of Syrians living there – knowledge the researcher had due to her prior work experience at UNICEF Türkiye in Ankara – and this was expected to translate into higher numbers of Syrians in kindergarten classrooms. The first school principal to express interest in the study also

reported that about half of their kindergarten students were Syrian. This would ensure that the children participating in the study would have the experience of attending a diverse preschool class and interacting with children from the other community.

After establishing understanding with this school principal, both kindergarten classes in the school were visited by the researcher. While refugee students constituted roughly half of the classroom population in both the kindergarten classes, the Iraqi students outnumbered the Syrian students in one of the classes, and this was considered unsuitable since the book that had been developed to initiate the adapted bibliotherapy intervention featured a friendship between a Turkish child and a Syrian child precisely so that most of the children in the class would be able to identify with the protagonists. If this class were to be selected for the project, there was a risk that the Iraqi students would not identify with the protagonists in the book and the children who would identify would be much fewer than if we implemented the intervention in the other class. Therefore, for these equity and effectiveness reasons, it was decided to focus on the other kindergarten class. Although this kindergarten class had slightly more refugee students (10) than Turkish students (7), considering the small difference in the number of refugee and Turkish students as well as the breakdown of the refugee students by country of origin (8 were Syrian, 1 was Iraqi, 1 was Afghan), the high rate of absenteeism in kindergarten (in general, and also in this classroom), and the broader context of refugee experience as minorities in the city/country, it was decided that the study could be implemented in this class.

Participants

The teacher of the class had been teaching in Turkish public preschools for ten years, six of which had been in Ankara but this was her first year at this particular school. At the time of initiation of this research project, she had established a very obvious warm rapport with all the children in the class, despite a persisting language barrier, whereby she did not speak Arabic and the Syrian/Iraqi children spoke very little Turkish. There were 17 children enrolled in the class at the time data collection began. With the exception of two children, all children in the class participated in the study with their parents' signed consent and their own verbal consent. These 15 children included 7 Syrian children (5 girls and 2 boys), 6 Turkish children (4 girls and 2 boys), 1 Iraqi child (girl) and 1 Afghan child (girl). With the exception of two children who were

younger and one child who was older, all 15 children who participated in the study were aged 5-6 years. Among the parents, while parents of 13 children consented to participate in the study, interviews could only be conducted with 9 of them due to scheduling constraints at the end of the school year. This included 8 mothers (4 Syrian, 3 Turkish, 1 Iraqi) and 1 father (Syrian). Table 1 below summarizes the basic information about the participants in the study.

The teacher

As this was an action research, the teacher was both a study participant in the traditional sense as well as a co-facilitator for the intervention.

She guided the timing of implementation activities and she created space in the class activity schedule to accommodate these activities. She also led the reading activity in the class for both the first and second books, reading aloud to the children in Turkish while the interpreter followed her and read aloud to the children in Arabic. She reviewed the draft of the second story and gave positive feedback as well as some editorial suggestions. When children got disruptive or distracted, or when many of the children were absent from school, she consulted with the researcher on next steps and demonstrated great agility in taking things forward.

In addition, the teacher also facilitated the research aspects of the project in several ways. She accommodated the interviewing of children before and after the implementation of the intervention, as well as in-class observations by the researcher and her interpreters. She facilitated communication with the parents throughout the implementation process, including follow-ups when needed, as well as the scheduling of interviews with them at the end of the process. She made herself available after school hours for interviews with the researcher before and after the implementation of the intervention. She was a constant source of encouragement and inspiration for the researcher and her perceptions and insights on the intervention were extremely valuable.

Table 1. *Basic information on parents and children in the study*

Parent	Community	Hometown	Gender of parent	Child in study (Gender) & Age	Siblings of study child & their age relative to study child
Parent 1	Refugee	Aleppo	Female	Nahla (Girl) 6 years old	2 Girls (1 older & 1 younger)
Parent 2	Host	Yozgat	Female	Zuhal (Girl) 5 years old	2 Boys (Both much older)
Parent 3	Refugee (6 years)	Mosul	Female	Zahra (Girl) 6 years old	1 Boy & 2 Girls (2 older & 1 younger)
Parent 4	Refugee (7 years)	Homs	Female	Ubaid (Boy) 5 years old	1 Girl (Older than Ubaid)
Parent 5	Refugee	Homs	Female	Safa (Girl) 5 years old	1 Boy (Younger than Safa)

Table 1 (continued). *Basic information on parents and children in the study*

Parent	Community	Hometown	Gender of parent	Child in study (Gender) & Age	Siblings of study child & their age relative to study child
Parent 6	Refugee	Homs	Female	Azad (Boy) 5 years old	2 Boys (Younger than Azad)
Parent 7	Host		Female	Ipek (Girl) 4 years old	1 Boy (Much older than Ipek)
Parent 8	Refugee	Qamishli	Male	Isra (Girl) 5 years old	1 Boy & 1 Girl - (1 older & 1 younger)
Parent 9	Host		Female	Burcu (Girl) 5 years old	1 Girl & 1 Boy (1 older & 1 younger)
Parent 10 No interview	Host		Female	Ilay (Girl) 5 years old	1 Girl (Younger than Ipek)

Table 1 (continued). *Basic information on parents and children in the study*

Parent	Community	Hometown	Gender of parent	Child in study (Gender) & Age	Siblings of study child & their age relative to study child
Parent 11 No interview	Host			Erdem (Boy) 5 years old	
Parent 12 No interview	Refugee			Aisha (Girl) 5 years old	
Parent 13 No interview	Refugee			Rabab (Girl) 5 years old	
Parent 14 No interview	Refugee			Yamna (Girl) 5 years old	
Parent 15 No interview	Host			Efe (Boy) 5 years old	

Physical setting

The preschool classroom in which this study was conducted was located on the first floor of the primary school, across from one other preschool classroom. The enclosed hallway between the two classrooms had tables which were used for snack time alternately by both classes. The hallway also led to bathrooms specifically for preschool children. The classroom was carpeted and furnished with 1 round table and 2 rectangular tables, as well as chairs for the children. The furniture was frequently re-arranged to suit the ongoing activities in the class and chairs were dragged out to the hallway by children for snack time and then back to the class again. The teacher's desk was in the front right corner of the classroom with some shelving behind it for storing documents and writing materials. There was a computer on the teacher's desk and a screen on the front wall of the classroom that allowed for the projection of videos of songs, usually during Zumba time and clean-up time after freeplay.

Toys in the classroom were arranged along the front and side walls and included blocks, lego, soft toys, kitchen toys and automobiles. There were only two books in the midst of toys on one of the shelves along the side wall. The teacher lamented that the materials in the class were not adequate for encouraging creative play and that children had to be reminded to share materials with their peers. One of the side walls of the classroom was fitted with lockers while the other one was fitted with windows that looked onto the central courtyard of the school where children from the primary school spent their recess. The back wall of the classroom was fitted with boards to display the children's artwork and hooks to hang their bags and jackets. The preschool children visited the gym in the basement of the school or the courtyard on an ad hoc schedule decided by the teacher and these visits were much awaited by the children. The courtyard was a vast open space but did not have any playground equipment for preschool children and therefore there main preoccupations outside were running around and playing with sand and water from a nearby tap. The researcher observed children both outdoors and inside the classroom, while interviews were conducted in the library adjacent to the preschool entrance inside the primary school.

Social setting

The social context of the school was described by the school principal at the outset of the study. He indicated that the half the school population was constituted of refugees, mainly from Syria but also from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. He perceived parents as having a central role in the school community and emphasized their influence on the children. He noted that communication problems and adaptation problems were among the core challenges that the school faced.

The principal lamented the low levels of Turkish language skills among refugee students and indicated a belief that the refugee parents' knowledge of the Turkish language and attitudes towards learning it had a strong influence on children's own Turkish language acquisition and adaptation within the school community. He also indicated a belief that the host community is torn between welcoming or accommodating refugee families into the school community in their time of need and concerns about their children's academic success due to poor language skills among the refugee children in the school. As with refugee families, he opined that parents' attitudes towards refugees in the school had a strong influence on children's attitudes towards refugee schoolmates.

For all these reasons, the principal was very welcoming of the study and its focus on improving social cohesion between the host and refugee communities. While the school been receiving some material resources from the Ministry of National Education, e.g. smart screens and adapted books, to facilitate the integration of refugee students in the school, as well as the services of a security guard and a Turkish-Arabic interpreter, he indicated that this was not enough and he was particularly interested in being supported to implement a more interactive curriculum. This sentiment was also shared by the teacher, who confessed that the main challenge she experienced as the teacher of such a diverse class is that her communication with the refugee children was quite limited. She indicated a belief that this limited communication between preschool children and their teacher was not favorable for their socio-emotional development as well as her for own job satisfaction.

3.3 Data Collection Process

First of all, ethical permission from the Middle East Technical University was secured at the outset of the study. Official permission for data collection was then granted by the Provincial Directorate of the Ministry of National Education in Ankara. Data collection, including both observations and interviews, were conducted in 25 school days during April-June 2022. This entailed a few days of observations, followed by baseline interviews with the school principal, the teacher and the children. Interviews were interspersed with observation when interviews were not possible due to children's absenteeism or class activities. After the baseline interviews were completed, the first book (*Khaled and Eren Become Friends*; description included in next Section 3.5 below) was read aloud by the teacher in the classroom, with consecutive Arabic translation by an interpreter. A copy of the book was sent home with each child, along with a letter soliciting the families' ideas for the continuation of the story in the book. Once their ideas were received, these were discussed in the class with the children in a child-friendly game format and the children were invited to draw the illustrations for the second book. The researcher then formulated the second story using the ideas and illustrations received from the participants and solicited feedback from the teacher on an initial draft. For children who were not present on the day of the illustration activity, previous drawings from baseline interviews were used instead. The second book (*Khaled and Eren Go to the Seaside*; description included in Section 3.5 below) was thus created with the participation of all the children in the class. It was also read aloud by the teacher in the classroom, again with consecutive interpretation into Arabic, and then a copy was sent home with each child, along with a letter appreciating the families' contributions towards co-creating the book and encouraging them to read it again with their children. Following this process, endline interviews were conducted with the participants.

Two rounds of interviews to be conducted at baseline or before intervention and at endline or after intervention had been planned with all study participants mentioned above. However, upon feedback from the teacher about difficulties for parents to come to the school, the plan to interview parents before the intervention was abandoned because it would cause undue inconvenience to the parents and endline interviews were considered more important in terms of getting their perspectives on the

intervention. Additionally, while baseline interviews were conducted with all 15 children who consented, endline interviews could only be conducted with 12 children due to absenteeism and the end of the school year. And finally, while the teacher agreed during her baseline interview, as well as in two subsequent conversations with the researcher, to journal her observations of the children's relational behaviors in the classroom, she reported at her endline interview that she could not find the time to do this. However, there were also some unexpected data collection opportunities that were not planned for at the outset of the study. For example, the researcher was invited to join several school events such as the children's day celebration and the year-end exhibition party. Upon the researcher's request, the teacher also shared the attendance records of the children for the whole year. The events were helpful for observing school community dynamics since the parents were also invited and the children's attendance records might shed some light on the origin of the relational dynamics in the class considering frequent absenteeism.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Interview guides were used for semi-structured interviews with children, parents, the teacher and the school principals (Appendix C). Audio recordings of all interviews were made with the consent of the participants and were transcribed word by word prior to data analysis.

For interviews with the children, child-friendly research techniques were additionally used as recommended by Freeman and Mathison (2009), specifically drawings and photo elicitation. As the authors explain, drawing is not only an interactive activity enjoyed by the children, it also allows them to synthesize their experiences and communicate about them in a way they may not be able to do verbally. During the baseline interviews, drawing their freeplay time was a major focus of the interview, whereby it served not only as an activity for the children while they talked to the researcher and interpreter but was also discussed as part of the interview and eventually used in both data analysis and the second book. During endline interviews, drawing still served as an activity for the children while they talked to the researcher and interpreter but it was not a focus of discussion in the interview due to time and

attention constraints. Instead, the photo elicitation technique was used during the endline interviews with children. As the authors explain, this technique can be used to explore participants' ideas and expand on themes. Photos were taken by the researcher during various stages of the intervention and were displayed on a nearby table during endline interviews. During these interviews, children's reactions to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention were first explored verbally for a few minutes, after which the children were shown the photos and asked to choose the ones they would like to talk about more. The discussion of the photos allowed for conversations with the children about both the content and the process of the intervention, as well as their own and peers' participation in the process.

For the observations conducted in the study, the participant observation methodology was employed. The researcher and interpreter built a rapport with the children in the first week of data collection and then started taking notes on subsequent visits to the school. Children would often try to engage with the researcher and interpreter, especially during their freeplay time (e.g. bringing pretend food when playing with kitchen toys or play dough, inviting them to see their constructions with jigsaws and legos etc.). The researcher and interpreter humored the children in these instances and then resumed the observations.

3.5 Intervention Procedure

Two books were used for the adapted bibliotherapy intervention. The first one was called *Khaled and Eren Become Friends* and the second one was called *Khaled and Eren Go to the Seaside*. Khaled and Eren are first grade students attending the same school. Both books were written originally in English, but then translated into Turkish and Arabic and printed in a bilingual format with each page containing text in both languages. Since there was also an Afghan student in the class, one copy of each book was prepared in Turkish and Farsi bilingual format. The reason for the bilingual format was so that the books could be read to the children again at home by the parents in their home language.

Khaled and Eren Become Friends was written by the researcher and illustrated by the researcher's colleague. In this story, Eren, who is the Turkish protagonist, is anxious about the difficulties he is having to understand the new topic of subtraction. He also feels startled by the monster he has seen outside the classroom window, and when some of the children in the class begin to tease and taunt him about this, he feels sad and excluded. Khaled, who is the Syrian protagonist, shows empathy and understanding and reaches out to Eren when he gets overwhelmed and retreats under a tree in the schoolyard during recess. He also puts Eren at ease by explaining that the monster was just a schoolmate in costume for drama/theater rehearsal. Eren is relieved and hugs Khaled which makes him happy and reminds him what it feels to belong. The two boys watch the school play (drama) together that afternoon. Khaled notices that Eren is upset at the end of the play and asks his new friend what is wrong. When Eren explains that he is anxious about the subtraction homework, Khaled offers to help him with it since he has understood it well.

Khaled and Eren Go to the Seaside was co-created by the researcher and the parent participants in the study and illustrated entirely by the child participants in the study. In this story, Eren and his sister Damla visit the house of their friends Khaled and Amira. They play together, enjoy snacks made by Khaled and Amira's mother, and then Khaled helps Eren with the subtraction homework as he had promised in the first book. Later that day, Eren and Damla's father takes the four children to the seaside and they have a lot of fun there. At one point, Khaled is afraid that the water is too cold and is hesitant to swim. Eren shows empathy and understanding and reaches out to Khaled to encourage him to swim. Khaled feels supported and grateful to have a friend like Eren. These shared experiences make the children and their parents very happy. The Turkish protagonists are excited about the opportunities to learn about a new culture, e.g. new language and food, and the Syrian protagonists are happy about the welcoming attitude of their neighbors.

These books capture the friendship and shared experiences of refugee and host families. They showcase similarities as an entry point for friendship and how differences can be harnessed to help each other. They also showcase the joys and anxieties of young children and their resilience to cope with setbacks.

Figure 4. *The books used in the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

3.6 Data Analysis

As per the case study approach, multiple forms of data were collected from multiple sources. Table 2 below summarizes the types of data collected from each type of study participant and for which research questions these data were analyzed.

Prior to data analysis, all observation notes and interview recordings were transcribed into a digital format by the researcher manually. Additionally, the researcher consulted the interpreters to clarify or confirm certain parts of the participants' answers if these were not clear in the audio records. A separate file was then created for each interview transcript and named as per participant type. For example, the interviews with a refugee parent-child dyad were named as Child1BR (baseline interview with refugee child), Child1ER (endline interview with refugee child) and Parent1ER (endline interview with refugee parent). Similarly, the interviews with a parent-child dyad from the host community were named as Child2BH (baseline interview with the host community child), Child2EH (endline interview with host community child) and Parent2EH (endline interview with host community parent). This method of naming made it easier to conduct a more holistic analysis of each family's experiences as well as to conduct separate analyses of the experiences of refugee families and host community families.

The analysis of the data was not a linear process but a circular one of the kind described by Creswell (2007) as a data analysis spiral. It entailed the management of data which

Table 2. *Study participants: Who participated and how?*

Participants	**Participant information**	**Data collected**	**Data analyzed to answer…**
Refugee Children (Aged 60-72 months)	7 Syrians (5 girls, 2 boys) 1 Iraqi (1 girl) 1 Afghan (1 girl)	In-class observations, Baseline interviews (9), Drawings, Endline interviews (7)	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
Host Community Children (Aged 48-72 months)	6 Turks (4 girls, 2 boys)	In-class observations, Baseline interviews (6), Drawings, Endline interviews (5)	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
Refugee Parents	5 Syrians (4 mothers, 1 father) 2 Iraqis (1 mother, 1 father)	Endline interviews (6) Story inputs (5)	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4
Host Community Parents	4 Turks (4 mothers)	Endline interviews (3) Story inputs (3)	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4
Teacher	1 (female)	Baseline interview and endline interview	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4
School Principal	1 (male)	Baseline interview and endline interview	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4

resulted in creation and organization of files, reading and reflecting which resulted in notes and memos, classifying and interpreting which resulted in themes and findings, and representing and visualizing the findings in the form of tables and figures.

While thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used as the main approach, the children's interviews were complicated to analyze and multiple techniques had to be used. For example, regarding their social interactions, most of them usually gave very brief answers, which then required a lot of probing questions, often closed-ended ones.

This made thematic analysis difficult and a checklist of sentiments had to be created and used to draw out patterns of experiences. The checklist was generated by analyzing all the interviews with host community children and noting down the phrases or words that were used by them or confirmed by them while talking about their social interactions. The checklist was then expanded upon by analyzing the interviews with the refugee children. If several children from either group alluded to a certain sentiment, this was considered notable and similar sentiments were grouped together as a theme. For example, based on the sample of checklist entries and outcomes provided in Table 3 below, the sub-finding on children's experience of communicating with peers from the other community, which is described in sections 4.1.1.5 and 4.1.2.5, was identified and then elaborated on using children's descriptions. Other themes related to the children's experience and navigation of interactions with peers were developed in a similar way.

Table 3. *Checklist of children's sentiments about peer interactions*

Children's sentiments about peers from own or other community (sample from checklist)	**No. of Host Community Children who mentioned or confirmed this**	**No. of Refugee Children who mentioned or confirmed this**
I don't understand him (other)	4	3
They don't understand me (other)	4	1
They understand me (own)	1	2
They understand me (other)	2	0

Thematic analysis alone was also not suitable for understanding children's friend preferences, so these were tabulated for each child as per Appendix F1 and then analyzed for each group, refugee and host community, as a whole. Similarly, the analysis of children's drawings entailed a tabulation that included the children's own descriptions of what they drew as well as the researcher's descriptions and reflections.

This was used as a complementary data source when writing the findings. These methods were considered necessary to ensure that the voice of children from each group were adequately represented in the findings. Furthermore, guided by Stake's (1995) approach to analyze and interpret data in case study research, meaning making of the children's interviews relied on categorical aggregation which drew on instances elsewhere in the data, such as parents' interviews or researcher's observations, rather than direct interpretation of single instances gleaned from children's interviews alone.

The analysis of adult interviews, including interviews with parents from both communities, the teacher and the school principal, were more amenable for thematic analysis. As with the children's interviews, each interview transcript was first read several times and research memos were written on preliminary insights. Significant phrases were then color coded and categorized under themes and the significant phrases under each theme were then analyzed together to piece out the findings. However, in addition to categorizing data on the basis of comparison and identification of similarities and differences across groups (e.g. children's experience of communicating with peers from the other community or parents' engagement in their children's playmate preferences), connections were also made based on contiguity or linking of data as prescribed by Maxwell and Miller (2008). For example, a connection was identified between the opportunities (or lack thereof) to meet peers outside school and the nature of social play experiences of the children at school. Similarly, a connection was identified between parents' social experiences beyond school and within the school community. These connections were developed into findings just the same as those which emerged from comparisons. At the end of the data analysis process, research memos about the interview transcripts were re-visited to ascertain if anything had been overlooked in the process of thematic analysis.

The transcripts of the in-class observations were also read several times and a research memo with preliminary insights was drafted. As with the tabulation of children's drawings, these insights from the observations guided the use of observations to complement the findings which emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts of the children and the teacher.

3.7 Researcher Role and Motivation for the Study

This study was motivated by a need to address a problem identified during the researcher's most recent professional assignment. The researcher worked as a social policy specialist with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) between 2010 and 2020, during which period she supported public institutions, mainly national ministries responsible for social welfare, in various countries to design and implement child-sensitive social assistance programs for families. Most recently, she supported the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) in Türkiye to extend the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) program to Syrian and other refugee families.

With the aim of encouraging and supporting families to send their children to school regularly, the CCTE program provided supplementary income to eligible low-income families whose children did not miss more than 4 days of school in any given school month. When refugee children missed more than 4 days of school in a month, child protection caseworkers associated with the program would visit their families and conduct assessments to identify any child protection risks in the household, including the reasons for missing school. According to these child protection assessments, frequently cited reasons for missing school included experiences of social exclusion or bullying at school as a result of which children did not feel like going to school. As a manager of the CCTE program, the researcher was troubled by this finding since it called into question the basic premise of the program that attending school regularly is in the best interest of the child and families should therefore be encouraged and supported to send their children to school. If refugee children were having discriminatory or otherwise negative social experiences in Turkish public schools, then was it really in their best interest to attend school considering the emotional and psychological impact of such experiences? At the same time, the researcher also wondered how these social experiences might be affecting Turkish children. How were they and their families navigating the unprecedented presence of refugee children in school? How could the situation be improved for all children involved?

Although the child protection caseworkers associated with the CCTE program would in some cases be able to discuss the issue with the relevant school administration and enlist their support for trying to improve the situation, the researcher felt a need to do more in order to prevent such negative experiences in the first place. Acknowledging that this was a wider systemic problem beyond the scope of the CCTE program, reflected also in the generally deteriorating social cohesion between host and refugee communities in Türkiye, the researcher decided she would use the opportunity of conducting a thesis required for the Master's degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE) from the Middle East Technical University to help understand and address the problem.

At this point, the researcher was convinced that for any potential intervention to effectively improve social cohesion, it had to involve both Syrian and Turkish communities, and parents as well as children. Learning about the national ECE curriculum in Türkiye through the Master's coursework at METU, particularly the feature of parental involvement, the researcher also became convinced that public preschool classes would not only be the most natural channel to address the problem but also the most appropriate setting for 'nipping it in the bud' since these classes are the first possible point of cross-group interaction with children from the other community for both Turkish and Syrian children, and this would become even more significant once kindergarten education (Anasinifi) became free and mandatory in Türkiye, which is anticipated in 2023 as per the declaration of the Ministry of National Education.

Another feature of the national ECE curriculum that emerged as promising for implementing a group-based intervention was the practice of circle time in kindergartens, whereby the teacher and children all settle down, often on cushions on the floor of the classroom, in a circular formation so that they are facing each other and can have a group discussion or activity. In particular, the use of circle time to read and discuss storybooks with the students provides a natural setting for group-based bibliotherapy. Having been inspired around the same time to write a children's book series about friendship and empathy, the researcher began to consider the prospect of implementing an intervention that would entail reading this book series with children in a diverse preschool classroom with both Turkish and Syrian students. In order for

the books to be relatable to the children, they would feature Turkish and Syrian protagonists and would include narratives from children that I had come across during my time as CCTE manager. The researcher wrote the first book of the series *Khaled and Eren Become Friends* in June 2020 and chalked out some ideas for the subsequent books in the series which she also intended to write. However, upon the suggestion of her thesis advisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Karsli-Calamak, who already had extensive experience conducting research and implementing interventions related to the education of refugee children within the public school system in Türkiye, she decided to co-create the second book and any subsequent books with the children and families participating in the study. Doing so would empower the study participants to share their own narratives while affording them also an opportunity to create something together and experience a sense of creative accomplishment.

Co-creating a book with the children and their families in a diverse kindergarten classroom in Türkiye would necessarily require working in multiple languages. Although the researcher had a cursory understanding of the Turkish language since she had been living in Ankara for over five years at the time she began the fieldwork for this study, her speaking ability in the Turkish language was extremely limited. Furthermore, her Arabic and Farsi language skills were non-existent. The support of several interpreters was therefore enlisted during the fieldwork for this study. When the researcher communicated with study participants, it was almost always in English, with Turkish, Arabic or Farsi interpretation provided by the enlisted interpreters. This introduced yet another 'otherness' in an already diverse school, with the school principal remarking that it was making their school even more 'international' and allowing the researcher to empathize with refugee parents about the difficulties of both learning Turkish and also navigating life in Ankara without knowing Turkish. At the same time, given that the researcher was perceived as a teacher by the children, and also portrayed as such by them to their parents, her language limitations might have normalized the otherwise tainted reality that not everyone in this school community could speak Turkish. Furthermore, this language limitation did not have to mean that communication could not take place with Turkish speakers and that it was still possible to contribute positively to the classroom or school community. We simply needed some assistance in order to do so.

Finally, conducting this study would have been absolutely impossible for the researcher without the cooperation and assistance of the teacher. Apart from working closely with the researcher on the planning of interviews with children and parents, the teacher played a fundamental role in the action part of the research and was the main facilitator for the adapted bibliotherapy intervention. She was the one who read the stories of Khaled and Eren in Turkish to the children during the implementation of the intervention, with Arabic and Farsi interpreters translating for the refugee children in the classroom. She also facilitated communication with the children's parents regarding their engagement in the co-creation of the second book through the existing teacher-parents' WhatsApp Group.

The researcher conceived and conducted this study with the very sincere hope that it would give voice to affected host and refugee families in Türkiye on the issue of navigating social relations in the public school context. Furthermore, acknowledging the agency of both children and parents from both host and refugee communities, it is hoped that the findings of this study will inform relevant policymakers on both the challenges and possible solutions for improving social cohesion through public preschools, thereby affording influence and audience to the study participants.

3.8 Ethical Considerations for the Study

Due to her professional training in the humanitarian sector, the researcher was very careful to take every precaution to 'do no harm' and follow the ethics protocols for qualitative research laid out by Creswell (2007). She secured permission from both the Ethical Review Board at the Middle East Technical University and the Ministry of National Education prior to the study. Before collecting data from the participants, their informed consent was received in writing from themselves, and in the case of children, from their parents. In addition to their parents' consent, children were verbally asked if the researcher could ask them some questions at the start of the interview, and the interview was wrapped up if they indicated a desire to stop at any point.

Prospective participants were informed that there would be no remuneration, monetary or in-kind, for participating in the study and that non-participation in the study would also not be punitive in any way, including repercussions for their child's academic success. There was one child whose parent did not give consent for their participation in the study, yet this children were not excluded from receiving the picture books used in the intervention. Although not intended as such, the children considered these books gifts, and the researcher ensured that the non-participating child did not feel left out.

All participants were asked for permission to record the interview, and if they asked why the researcher explained the purpose of the recording. These recordings were not shared with anyone and were deleted from the recorder prior to returning it to METU. Similarly, interview transcripts were not shared with anyone and participants were assigned codes during data analysis to ensure anonymity. All the children's names were replaced with pseudonyms to protect their privacy and respect the principle of confidentiality. The data was used solely for the purpose of this study and the researcher will relinquish all the collected data to the thesis supervisor upon the completion of this thesis whereby it will be secured as per METU guidelines.

The researcher also took steps to ensure participants shared in the ownership of this research project. Story inputs and drawings from all the participants were included in the second book and they were given due credit as co-authors and illustrators on the cover page of the book.
They were also acknowledged in the book and in this report. In the exit interview with the teacher and the school principal, some of the key emerging findings from the study were shared and potential solutions were discussed. Both of them indicated strong interest and ownership in the project and made plans to address the emerging issues in the next school year.

Finally, since the study involved children, some extra precautions were taken. The logistics of the school did not allow for conducting the interviews with the children in "a private space in view of others" as recommended (Freeman and Mathison, 2009) and these had to be conducted in the library adjoining the preschool classrooms. This was a large room on the ground floor with windows facing the playground and the

security guard. All interviews were conducted in the presence of an interpreter and children were free to leave the library whenever they wanted. Most of them had never seen the library prior to their interview, so they were curious and allowed to walk around the room before being seated for the interview. As with the adults, the researcher was careful not to ask any sensitive questions, especially regarding the situation in Syria. She also conducted the interviews with them in a child-friendly way by inviting them to draw their freeplay time. Most children love to draw so this was very effective in reducing the power imbalance between them and the adult researcher and interpreter (Punch, 2000). Furthermore, it was an attempt to make talking about their friends and playmates more comfortable for them, as prescribed by Freeman and Mathison (2009), and it also gave them an additional way to express their voice in research pertaining to them, as per the aims of humanistic philosophy and psychology (Greene & Hill, 2005).

3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study

While there is no single reality in qualitative research, several measures were used by the researcher to maximize the trustworthiness of this study as per the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985) for studies conducted in naturalistic settings. Specifically, the measures of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and peer debriefing were employed and each of these is described in greater detail below.

First of all, the study entailed a prolonged engagement whereby the researcher not only read extensively about refugees, social cohesion issues and interventions, children's social development, and peace education, building on her existing knowledge on these issues from her work with UNICEF Türkiye and her undergraduate work on social and emotional development in a laboratory preschool at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, but also pursued opportunities to observe and practice conducting qualitative research with preschool children in Ankara prior to embarking on this study. This included enrolling in a graduate course on Qualitative Research offered by the Department of Mathematics and Science Education at the Middle East Technical

University and conducting a phenomenological study on the relational lives of preschoolers in Ankara as her course project. The researcher conducted this phenomenological study at a public preschool in the Cankaya district of Ankara over a course of six weeks with 12 preschoolers aged 5-6 years (4 girls and 8 boys), enlisting the help of a Turkish-English interpreter, and it served as a very useful practice for conducting research with children of preschool age in Türkiye and navigating her own language barrier in the process. Additionally, with regard to prolonged engagement, the researcher also built trust with the school principal and teacher in the present study before embarking on data collection. This was done through visiting the school principal together with the thesis supervisor in the first instance and informal conversations with the school principal and the teacher during subsequent visits.

The second measure used by the researcher to establish the trustworthiness of this study was to design and conduct the research in a way that it would allow for persistent observation rather than one shot data collection. She visited the selected preschool class regularly, several days a week, over the course of three months. Within this duration she interviewed all participants twice, except the parents to avoid inconveniencing. For all other participants, interviews were conducted once at the beginning of the study and then again at the end of the study. The latter not only allowed her to ask participants about their reactions to the intervention, but also to re-visit some of their previous statements or actions and elaborate on these further.

The third measure used by the researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of this study was to design and conduct the research in a way that it would allow for triangulation of the data from multiple sources. So apart from the baseline and endline interviews mentioned above, the children were also given the option to express themselves through drawings and through their own actions which the researcher also observed and documented.

The final measure used by the researcher took to establish the trustworthiness of the study was to engage her thesis supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Karsli-Calamak from the Department of Early and Elementary and Early Education at all stages of the research. Dr. Karsli- Calamak was very gracious and attentive throughout the process,

giving detailed feedback on the interview guides and the book manuscripts, facilitating introductions with the school principal and making herself available for frequent debriefings during the fieldwork. Her insights and advice continued during the data analysis stage and the writing of this thesis. As one of the foremost researchers on refugee education in Türkiye, her guidance and attention benefitted the study tremendously and ensured that it met high standards.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 How do the children navigate interactions with their peers

4.1.0. Children's overall experience of social relations in the preschool

The data sources used to answer this research question and the sub-questions were children's interviews and drawings, parents' interviews and the interviews with the teacher and the principal. Other data sources include in-class observations of the children. In this introductory subsection I present overall findings which describe the children's experience of social relations more generally, visualized using children's own words and drawings in Figure 5 below, before moving on to the findings separately for host and refugee children.

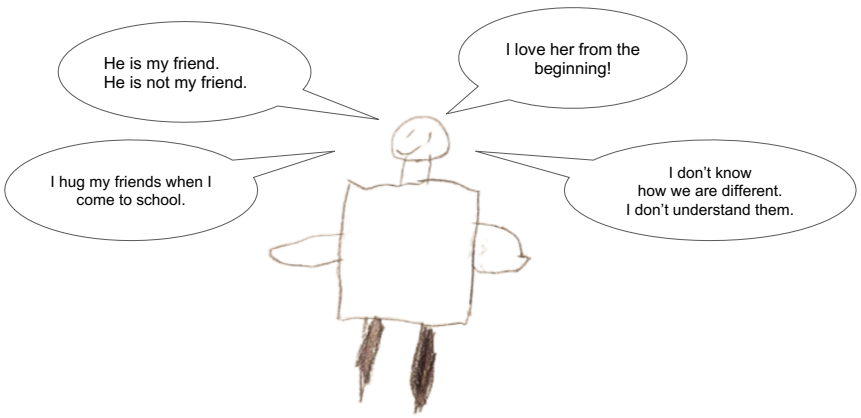


Figure 5. *Children's overall experience of social relations in the preschool*

These are the grounding findings with regard to the children's social interactions in the context of preschool and are described in more detail below under four titles

which are: (a) the importance of social relations to children, (b) the decision of who is a friend (c) timing of forming a friendship (d) children's perception of otherness.

4.1.0.1 The importance of social relations to preschool children

When asked what makes them happy about coming to school, children consistently mentioned their friends or playing with their friends.

> *When I come to the class, all my friends come (to greet me). (Child 15H, Boy)*[5]
>
> *My friends (make me happy). I hug them when I come. (Child 1R, Girl)*

Figure 6. *"All this love is for all of us!" – A drawing by Aisha*

When asked what makes them sad about coming to school, most of the children didn't have an answer. Those who did, again mentioned other children, lamenting either their absence from school or challenges in relating to each other.

[5] (Child 15H, Boy) indicates that the preceding statement was made by child number 15 in the study who was from the host community (H) and a boy. Similarly, (Child 1R, Girl) indicates that the preceding statement was made by child number 1 in the study who was from the refugee community (R) and a girl. This format is used throughout the report, including for the adults who participated in the study. The teacher (female) and school principal (male) were both from the host community – this is not repeatedly indicated.

When there are no children (I get sad about coming to school). (Child 7H, Girl)

Sometimes Isra doesn't like me and starts to play with Ubaid. (Child 3R, Girl)

It is clear that for both host community children and refugee children in the studied classroom, social relations constitute a fundamental aspect of their school experience and their personal wellbeing. As one of the main aims of this study is to give voice to preschool children, this finding validates the focus of the research questions.

4.1.0.2. She is my friend. He is not my friend. Sometimes we are friends.

From the observations and conversations with children, it emerged that most children in the class are confident about indicating who their friends are and tend to spend most of their time with those children, while some are more variable in their choice of friends. This choice seems to be driven by independent personality or exclusion from group, which is examined further later.

When probed about their playmates, children sometimes mentioned peers that they did not initially indicate as friends. In one striking case, the child insisted that this peer was not his friend. An excerpt from his interview:

Researcher: So who do you like to play with most in the class?
Child 15H: Azad.
Researcher: What do you like to play with Azad?
Child 15H: With legos.
Researcher: Ah ok. Where is Azad from?
Child 15H: From Syria.
Researcher: Can you talk to him?
Child 15H: No, but... He only understands only one Turkish word.
Researcher: Ah ok. So is Azad your friend as well?
Child 15H: No, but we are playing.

Here the child's positioning of Azad as a playmate but not as a friend might indicate a prejudice against the refugee community. However, there was no opportunity to explore further since the child did not make any similar comments later and neither of this child's parents were available for an interview.

Finally, some children from both communities expressed ambivalent feelings about their peers from their own or the other community, indicating that sometimes they did not play with them or sometimes they were not nice to a mutual friend. Even harmless behavior if considered as inappropriate or against good etiquette by the children could land a peer in this ambivalent category. For example, one host community child indicated ambivalence about an ingroup peer because she was singing during lunch and she believed "we should not sing during lunch" whereas one refugee child described her ambivalence towards two host community peers as follows:

> *Yes, let them (Zuhal and Didem – both host community children) play (with us). Because they are Turks and so…Because they like to play with me. They like to play kitchen, to draw together. Yes, sometimes (they are my friends). Sometimes they play alone. (Child 3R, Girl)*

This also indicates a recognition on the part of the child of host community peers being distinct from refugee community peers.

4.1.0.3 The importance of the beginning for preschool children's friendships

Several participants in the study mentioned, alluded to or demonstrated how first impressions or early interactions can influence children's choice of friends and playmates.

> *Researcher: Do you know who are her friends in the school?*
> *Parent 2H: Didem. And they are sometimes fighting with Erdem. But she has friends, she can get along with friends, she can get new friends. The most, Didem.*
> *Researcher: And what do you think is the nature of her friendship with Didem?*
> *Parent 2H: I haven't had a chance to observe it. But she loves her from the very beginning.*

> *Researcher: Do you like to do the puzzles on your own or with your friends?*
> *Child 15H: With my friends.*
> *Researcher: Which friends do you like to do them with?*
> *Child 15H: The friends that I like.*
> *Researcher: Who are…?*
> *Child 15H: Azad, Erdem, Zuhal. The first time I played, I played with Azad and Erdem.*

However, there were also indications that new friends can be made during the course of the school year. For example:

> *Sometimes she talks about her friends at home. Sometimes about Isra, she said "Today I had a fight with Isra". Sometimes about Ubaid. Now in these days she is talking about Ubaid, like "I am becoming friends" or "We had a fight with Ubaid" something like this. (Parent 1R, Female)*

While the refugee mother above mentions her daughter's emerging friendship with another refugee child, in-class observations also revealed a similar emerging friendship between a host community child and a newly arrived refugee (Afghan) child.

4.1.0.4 Preschool children's perceptions of otherness and attitudes towards it

It emerged that otherness among their classmates is recognized primarily in terms of differences in mother tongue and this creates a challenge for host community children and refugee children to relate with each other. However, there is also clearly a desire among children from the two communities to relate with each other, attempts by them to overcome the language barrier in their interactions. For example, children were observed using gestures and refugee children would use their rudimentary Turkish on the part of refugee children. The children expressed feelings of frustration when they are not able to communicate effectively with each other. Some examples are as follows:

> *Researcher: Earlier you said that Azad understands one Turkish word or some Turkish words. Which words does he know?*
> *Child 15H: One word.*
> *Researcher: Which one?*
> *Child 15H: Can I play and yes? He only knows yes and no.*
> *Researcher: Mmmn. And did you learn any Arabic?*
> *Child 15H: No.*
> *Researcher: Is that the language Azad speaks?*
> *Child 15H: No. Syrian language.*
> *Researcher: Do you understand Syrian language?*
> *Child 15H: No. (Continues to draw.)*
> *Researcher: Who is your best friend in the class?*
> *Child 10H: Safa doesn't speak Turkish. She only speaks Arabic. Actually I don't understand her.*
> *Researcher: Who are your friends in the class?*

Child 10H: Ubaid. I don't understand him. And there's Azad. I don't understand him.
Researcher: Are they your friends?
Child 10H: Yeaahh (tentative), they were friends at some point and then we fought.
Researcher: What did you fight about?
Child 10H: We were playing. They couldn't understand me. One friend came to us. I said "don't step on it" but they don't understand. I would say "one" or "three" and they wouldn't understand me.

According to the teacher, when there are instances of aggression between children from the different communities, it is because they do not understand each other, not because they see each other as Turkish or Syrian. This perception was also echoed by the parents and the principal. Some excerpts are included below:

Our kids don't know if someone is Azerbaijani or Syrian. They don't care. A human is a human. It's a human for them. (Parent 7H, Female)

If they (children from the host community) make racism, the other children will not understand this, why it has happened to me. (They think) he does not like me, so I will not like him. Not because I'm Turk or I'm Syrian. There are Syrian children who do not love each other. (Parent 8R, Male)

I think that some notions are only for adults. For example, like foreign and refugee notions are only for adults. Kids don't understand that. Even if they don't talk the same language, if you put a couple of children in the same room or in the same class, they would spend a couple of hours, and they can play, they can get along. (School Principal)

The observations and conversations with the preschool children also revealed a similar story. They appeared to hit and smack each other without discrimination, imitate each other without discrimination, tell on each other to the teacher without discrimination, exclude each other from play without discrimination, and they help each other without discrimination. Furthermore, otherness does not necessarily seem to be viewed by them in negative ways or in ethnic or nationalistic terms but primarily in terms of linguistic differences. For example, while mainstream anecdotes are common about older refugee children being teased or verbally bullied by peers at school about their different, Syrian food, in this preschool classroom a child from the host community was observed noticing a difference between her lunch of a sandwich and her refugee

peer's lunch of hot food and assertively remarking to another child from the host community "That pilav is really nice!"

Thus, how do preschool children experience otherness and navigate a social context that is rich with otherness? To answer this question, the social interactions of host community children and refugee community children were examined separately. The following two sub-sections present the findings of that analysis.

4.1.1 How children from the host community navigate interactions with their peers

Table 4.below summarizes those findings detailed ahead in Section 4.1.1 and Section 4.1.2.

4.1.1.1 Friend patterns of host community children

All host community children named at least one other host community child as their friend, often two or more. Four out of these six children interviewed indicated at least one refugee child as their friend at baseline. A fifth indicated that he likes to play with a refugee child, but insisted that he is not a friend. The games they indicated they play with refugee children included jumping/climbing, lego and throwing ping pong balls in an egg crate. It is important to note that none of these games necessarily require verbal communication.

When asked about what they liked about their friends, they mentioned aspects of their physical appearance such as face, hair, clothes or the fact that their preferred activities aligned with their own. Their parents and teacher indicated that temperaments can also play a role. For example:

He's calm as Ipek so that's why she loves him. (Parent 7H, Female)

Table 4. *Children's navigation of interactions with preschool peers*

Peer Interaction Theme	Host Community Children	Refugee Children
Friendship patterns	– Friends and playmates are predominantly from own community. However, 4 out of 6 children did mention at least one refugee child as a friend. – Friendship is nurtured by liking or loving each other and doing things together.	– Friends and playmates are predominantly from own community. However, 3 out of 9 children did mention at least one refugee child as a friend. – Friendship is nurtured by liking or loving each other, doing things together, sharing things and talking.
Experience and navigation of conflict with peers	– Conflict is frequent. – Nature of conflict is complaining, hitting, pushing or unpleasant verbal exchanges. – Conflict with friends is more intense than conflict with other peers. – Peace is reached through offerings of hugs or candy.	– Conflict is frequent. – Nature of conflict is complaining, hitting, pulling, teasing, kicking out of ongoing play. – Conflict with friends is more intense than conflict with other peers. – Peace is reached through verbal affirmations and desirable snacks.
Social play experiences	– Invitation to play is important; not everyone is permitted into play. – Some children are play leaders, others are followers.	– Invitation to play or permission to join play is important. – Some children are play leaders, others are followers. – Play partners tend to be those who share preferences for activities. – Collaborative pretend play is frequent.

Table 4 (continued). *Children's navigation of interactions with preschool peers*

Peer Interaction Theme	Host Community Children	Refugee Children
Social play experiences (cont'd)	Play partners tend to be those who share preferences for that type of play (e.g. sedentary play v. movement-based play)	– Abandoning play or other activities to look at or communicate with children from other classes through the window is also frequent.
Experience of communicating with peers from the other community in the class	– Frustration widely experienced and expressed about not being able to understand refugee peers or be understood by them. – Desire harbored to play or connect with refugee peers more deeply. – Not critical of refugee peers for not knowing Turkish; awareness of own lack of knowledge of Arabic.	– Only a few children expressed not being able to understand host community peers or be understood by them. – Awareness of own lack of knowledge of Turkish. – Distressed by this awareness and parental pressure to interact more with host community peers.
Interactions with preschool peers outside school	– No interaction. – Live far from peers. –	– Time is spent together in the morning and afternoon in the shared car service to and from school. – Playing together in the park is a frequent occurrence, even a daily experience for some of the children.
Parental intervention in children's social interactions	– Urged to play with refugee children because "you are all in one class. – "Supported in initiative to help refugee peer. –	– Urged to play more with host cchildren and less with other refugee children because "you need to learn Turkish." – Approached with kindness by host community parent; inspired to reciprocate.

Host community children themselves did not articulate reasons for the higher prevalence of friends from their own community over the refugee community, but their parents explained:

> *It will be better if our kids wouldn't nitpick, like pick friends from Turkish groups. But as Syrian kids don't speak Turkish, that will be the end result. (Parent 2H, Female)*

> *Ipek is saying that when a Syrian kid tells me something, I don't understand. It's not because she wants to differentiate those people. Also it's the same situation for the Syrian kids. They know Arabic so they play together. Our kids know Turkish, so they play together. (Parent 7H, Female)*

Refugee children's limited knowledge of Turkish language was the most frequently cited factor that limited social interactions and friendships with host community children.

Host community children indicated experiencing friendship in terms of liking or loving their friends or doing things together, and this applied regardless whether they were talking about a friend from the refugee community or from their own community.
For example:

> *I only like Azad (refugee child). We like to jump on the trampoline. (Child 11H, Boy)*

> *My friends are Zuhal and Didem (both from own community). I love to play whatever Zuhal plays with. Didem, I love her so much. I like playing with her. Whatever she wants. Zuhal likes to play hide and seek. And sometimes when I was just about to say hide and seek, she says that. (Child 7H, Girl)*

The girl above gives an interesting glimpse into how verbal exchanges between friends, little or insignificant as these might be, can strengthen relationships or make them more enjoyable.

4.1.1.2 Experience and navigation of conflict with peers by host community children

The experience of conflict with peers was frequently cited by host community children, with friends and other peers alike. This could take the shape of complaining, hitting or pushing intentionally or inadvertently or unpleasant verbal exchanges.

An example of conflict with a peer (non-friend, refugee child) is as follows:

> *She is smacking me. Because she says that I took everything (toys, during play) and that's why she is battling with me. (Child 11H, Boy)*

Another example of conflict with a peer (non-friend, own community), provided by a parent:

> *She also loves Erdem but I think Erdem is a little naughty so sometimes she complains. (Parent 2H, Female)*

Conflicts with friends actually appeared to be more intense or emotionally charged, as per the following independent examples provided by a child and a parent respectively. However, as also mentioned below, children were also motivated to make peace with their friends and knew ways of doing so, usually hugs or offering candy.

> *One month ago, Zuhal pushed Ipek and she fell. And Zuhal said "O you deserved that!" She's saying that she did this to me. And also she said that. You deserved that. And that made her so sad. But she doesn't hold any grudges. She forgets that moment and she acts like nothing happened. (Parent 7H, Female)*

> *I feel sad when Didem argues with me. We hit each other. We separate from each other and do like this (demonstrates burying her head in her arms). We hug together (later, to make it better). (Child 2H, Girl)*

The final example below pertains to a conflict between a host community child and her refugee friends. Her frustration about not being understood was palpable:

> *(We fought because) they don't understand. They wouldn't understand me. I said "don't step on it" but they don't understand. I would say "one" or "three" and they wouldn't understand me. (Child 11H, Girl)*

The teacher and school principal both shared similar observations. They explained that fights between children from the host and refugee communities were usually due to the language difference and not being able to understand each other due to that difference. Just as fights between children from their own community can also break out when they don't understand each other.

4.1.1.3 Social play experiences of host community children

When talking about the nature of their play experiences with other children, host community children didn't elaborate too much during their interviews. However, it is still possible to glean some patterns from what they said or did, such as the importance of invitation to play or refusal to permit into ongoing play, play leadership and activity preferences. For example, the boy below considers invitation to play as essential for playing together and relies on others for extending it to him. The girl he mentions is one of the foremost play leaders in the class.

> *Zuhal isn't calling me to play with her but I am playing with Azad. Azad actually guesses the games that I love/want to play. (Child 15H, Boy)*

Similarly, some children indicated preferences for more sedentary activities while other children indicated preferences for activities that involved movement. Their play partners shared their preferences for these activities and could bring them together with children from the other community. For example:

> *I like doing something with him (Efe – host community child). For example, playing lego, playing/drawing with crayons. I like playing lego with Zahra (refugee child). (Child 7H, Girl)*

> *We (himself and his refugee friend) like to jump on the trampoline. And with other toys, we like to climb them and jump. (Child 11H, Boy)*

Other than lego, drawing and jumping, they mentioned playing hide and seek. The in-class observations coincided with their descriptions. Two of the girls from the host community were quite creative at making new games or controlling the rules of existing games, with one of them often observed at play with refugee children. The other one tended to need the teacher's encouragement to include children who were not her friends in her games, including those from the host community.

4.1.1.4 Experience of communicating with refugee peers for host community children

Almost all the children from the host community indicated not understanding or being understood by their peers from the refugee community.

She doesn't speak Turkish. She only speaks Arabic. I don't understand her. (Child 10H, Girl)

I cannot understand (Safa and Zahra). I'm saying "How's it going? Are you ok?" They say in Syrian language. I don't know that. (Child 7H, Girl)

She says that we don't understand each other at all. We don't understand what they are saying and they don't understand what we are saying. (Parent 9H, Female)

Although there were hints of frustration in what the children said about this topic, this was mainly due to the children's desire to play or connect with each other more deeply. Interestingly, they were never critical of their refugee peers for not knowing Turkish, in fact they almost seemed to be critical of themselves for not knowing Arabic. Furthermore, they tended to focus on what their refugee peers did know, for example:

He understands only one Turkish word. Can I play? And yes. He only knows yes and no. (He speaks) Syrian language. (Child 15H, Boy)

She (Yamna) speaks a little bit Turkish. (Child 2H, Girl)

According to one parent from the host community, her daughter even learned a couple of Arabic words and is trying to speak Arabic. These are all very encouraging signs, and are in stark contrast to observations of older children, including at the same school, one of whom was observed accosting his refugee peer during a schoolwide celebration for speaking Arabic and demanded that he speak Turkish.

4.1.1.5 Host community children's interactions with preschool peers outside school

None of the children from the host community indicated meeting their peers from the class outside of school. When probed about the topic, their responses indicated not knowing if any of their peers lived nearby or knowing that they lived far from their peers. One child explained that while it was not feasible for her to meet her friend due to the distance between their homes, she did interact with her over the phone sometimes. The friend she mentioned was from the host (own) community. However,

the same child also expressed a desire to interact on the phone with her Afghan friend, but indicated that she did not have her phone number.

4.1.1.6 Parental intervention in host community children's social interactions

Parents from the host community tended not to interfere too much with their children's social preferences and interactions. However, as reported by a Syrian parent, one of the parents from the host community was observed, on the first day of school, encouraging a child from the host community (not her own child but another in the classroom who had expressed that he could not play with the Syrian children because they are foreigners) to play with the refugee children. She reportedly said "All of you are children. All of you are in one class. You have to play together." Six months later, in-class observations during the course of this study showed that this child frequently played with Syrian children, despite not always getting along. He had a similar dynamic with host community children.

It is difficult to conclude to what extent his social behaviors were influenced by what that parent said to him, but the intervention of the parent itself is worth noting, both what she said and the fact that she said anything at all. It suggests an attitude of openness and a desire for social cohesion, as well as a potential for preschool children to change their social attitudes and behaviors.

Another interesting example is the following account of a parent from the host community:

> *A couple of days ago, it was the finish (end) of the classes and we were playing with dirt (sand) in the school garden. And there was Yamna. And as you know Yamna is a Syrian (actually Afghan) kid. I asked her "Where's your mom?" She said "My mom's sick. And she's sleeping at home." There Ipek said to me that we should wait for her brother to come at 2:00 or 3:00 from middle school. So we went there and we waited with Yamna till her brother comes. (Parent 7H, Female)*

Figure 7. *"My mom is sleeping at home." – A drawing by Yamna*

Here the parent from the host community not only displays concern and curiosity towards her daughter's refugee peer but is also co-opted by her daughter into an act of kindness and support, illustrating that children can be active agents in shaping mesosystem responses to diversity in the classroom.

4.1.2. How children from the refugee community navigate interactions with their peers

4.1.2.1 Friend patterns of refugee children

All refugee children, except the Afghan refugee child, named at least one other non-relative refugee child as their friend, often two or more. Only three out of these nine children indicated at least one host community child as their friend at baseline, and one of these probably only did so because her father was in the room. Four others indicated that they sometimes play with children from the host community. The

Afghan child indicated two girls from the host community as her friends and playmates, and this again illustrates the role of language in determining who children interact with. Although her own Turkish was limited, she could communicate with host community children to some extent while she could not communicate with the Arabic-speaking refugee children.

The games refugee children indicated they play with host community children included drawing, lego, hide and seek, as well as a game in which one sells watermelon and the other one buys it. The last one is interesting because it requires some basic level of communication, and the child who mentioned playing it did have more advanced Turkish skills than his other Arab refugee peers. He was often observed mediating interactions between Arabic-speaking children and Turkish speakers - children and adults alike.

When asked what they liked about their friends, refugee children also mentioned aspects of physical appearance or the fact that their preferred activities aligned with their own.

Figure 8. *"My best friend in the class" – A drawing by Safa*

However, they also mentioned sharing behaviors, e.g. "she gives me a coin" or "she has a blue car" and communication, e.g. "she talks to me every day" or "he

laughs/jokes". Related to the latter, one child who indicated host community children as her friends said she liked them because "they speak Turkish." She said this in the presence of her father, so it might not reflect her true feelings. But it is telling that refugee children have made the connection between having host community friends and learning Turkish, most likely due to pressures from their parents, or at least think that is what they are expected to say and do so.

As with host community children, temperaments might also be playing a role in who refugee children spend time with, or at least it was suggested so by one parent:

> *She is used to a calm environment. Her friends are getting noisy, they are doing noisy things. She is not like this. She is just trying to play in a calm way. She says they are too noisy. Sometimes they are having some scratch here, scratch here. On her face. She doesn't like make noise, or make harm for anyone. She plays with anyone. Sometimes when she said to the teacher, she tries to control the class, to ban them from making noise. (Parent 1R, Female)*

Finally, as with host community children, refugee children themselves did not articulate reasons for the higher prevalence of friends from their own community over the host community, but their parents explained and it was a familiar story:

> *Safa always plays with the Syrian children. But I said to her "Go and play with the Turkish ones!" She said "I can't understand them." After that I gave her a choice to do whatever she wants because she can't understand. (Parent 5ER, Female)*

> *She has one specific Turkish girl. I don't know her name. She talks about her, but unfortunately, she doesn't know Turkish, so she can't communicate too much with her. (Parent 3ER, Female)*

Refugee children's descriptions of friendship were more elaborate than those offered by children from the host community. Similar to host community children, they mentioned liking or loving their friends and playing or doing things together, but they also mentioned talking to each other and giving things to each other. For example, one of the girls said:

> *I like Ubaid a little bit, Zahra much more. We go to the canteen with Zahra. She gives me a coin to buy something from the canteen and she gives Azad a coin. (Friends) play, they talk, they agree. And if one of them says "I want from this" the other person gives it to them. (Child 5R, Girl)*

Although talking here about other refugee children, the girl who said the above was also observed generously sharing writing materials with her friend from the host community:

> Safa is playing a clapping game with Ilay at the teacher's desk. At Ilay's direction, they move to a nearby table where they have more space to move. They are observed smiling and playing the clapping game for a while. A bit later, they are tracing cards, and then drawing. Ilay makes eye contact with Safa and takes the pencil Safa is using. Safa tries to point out the teacher's box of pencils behind Ilay but Ilay does not register this and uses the pencil she got from Safa. Safa watches Ilay for a few moments and then goes and gets another pencil from the teacher's box and starts to use it. Ilay leaves the table and goes over to browse through the teacher's materials and eventually returns with a stapler. While she is away from the table, Safa uses her original pencil that Ilay has left behind. Then when Ilay returns to the table, she uses the other one (which she got from the teacher's box) again. Ilay uses the stapler she has just fetched, then wanders off again eventually returning with a stamp. Safa uses the stapler too, then continues to draw.
>
> – Observation Note (01.06.2022)

Figure 9. *Sharing is caring: A drawing by Safa*

Similar experiences of friendship were described by refugee children with other backgrounds. Examples from an Afghan girl and an Iraqi girl respectively are as follows:

> *I like them (Zuhal and Didem) because the three of us are playing hide and seek. There are many more games we are playing together. (Child 13R, Girl)*

(I like Isra) because she talks to me every day. (I like Ubaid) because he laughs too much. And we color together. (I like Safa) because she plays with me and she is making everything with me. We laugh with each other and we speak with each other. (Child 3R, Girl)

It is worth noting that the Afghan girl above mentions only playing and not talking, considering that she is talking about friends from the host community with whom she faces communication difficulties due to her emergent Turkish skills. Given the importance refugee children give to talking with their friends, observed just as well among refugee boys, it is perhaps not surprising that refugee children tended not to mention classmates from their host community as friends, even though they admitted playing with them and harboring positive feelings towards them.

4.1.2.2 Experience and navigation of conflict with peers by refugee children

Just like host community children, refugee children frequently mentioned experiencing conflict with peers, ranging from complaints about peers' behaviors to hitting and pulling.

They (Zuhal and Didem) make me crazy. Because they are making harm. They just keep making harm. Because they are jumping, escaping, everything. (Child 12R, Girl)

I don't talk to Erdem, I just hit him. Because he is laughing. I'm telling him to be silent, he doesn't respond to me. (Child 13R, Girl)

Although these examples are about conflicts with peers from the host community, similar accounts were shared about conflicts with refugee peers. As with refugee children, conflict with friends tended to be more emotionally charged than conflicts with non-friend peers:

I was handling a toy gun and I shot her by accident, and then she got sad. (Child 6R, Boy)

Ubaid, one day he is nice, one day he isn't. Azad came without socks. People started to laugh at him. And Ubaid said "Look at Azad, he came without socks." Afterwards he came to me. I said "Go out, you are in front of my head, I can't even breathe because you are above my head. Can you go?" Then Azad went to Ubaid, he hit Ubaid and they stated to fight. His hand wrongly (mistakenly) went to Ubaid's side and they started to fight. (Child 5R, Girl)

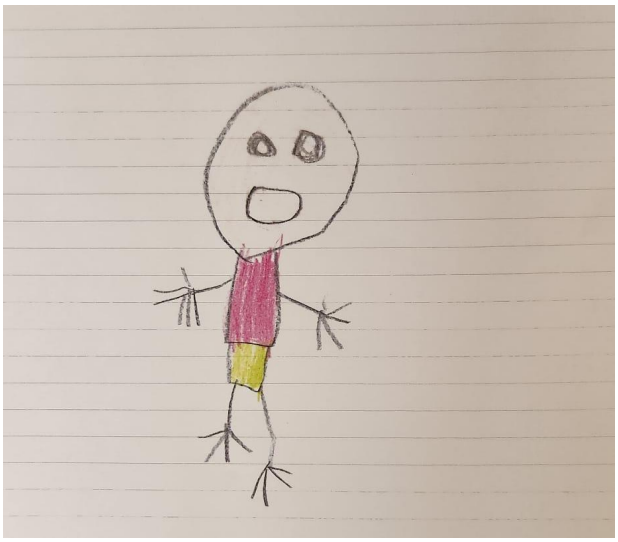


Figure 10. *"Go out, you are in front of my head!" - A drawing by Rabab*

> *One time we were playing and then Ilay pulled my hair. And then I pulled Ilay's hair. And then Zuhal pulled my hair and I pulled Zuhal's hair. And then Didem pulled my hand and then I pulled her leg, and that's how we had a falling out. (I have) no Turkish friends, (we) had a falling out. (Child 5R, Girl)*

An additional element that emerged is a group collectively punishing a friend for perceived transgressions by denying further participation in play. For example:

> *We are acting like mother and children (in pretend play). Aisha is the mother and Azad is her son. Azad took the spoon and went. She got angry with Azad because he got the spoon and went. After that we had a fight and kicked her out of the game. (Child 5R, Girl)*

Making peace after fights was described as follows:

> *Sometimes I tell Isra "I like you" and Isra says "I forgive you". (Child 3R, Girl)*

> *We have a falling out for a long time and then we make up a little bit. Whenever I have good foods, like watermelon, they come and tell me "ok, let's make up." I make up with them but I tell them, no, you can't have my food." (Child 5R, Girl)*

Just as was reported by host community children, affectionate advances and delicious snacks tend to be great peacemakers.

4.1.2.3 Social play experiences of refugee children

Refugee children, whether Syrian, Iraqi or Afghan, mentioned playing similar games as their host community peers, i.e. lego, hide and seek, drawing, and often with their involvement. A couple of examples are as follows:

> *Zuhal and Ilay (meant Didem) are much better (than Burcu). Sometimes they say to me: "Come and play with us!" Sometimes we play with cubes (lego). When we finish the lego, we go to draw. Just Didem. (Child 3R, Girl)*

> *I play with them (Azad and Safa). I study with them. We make a house. We make everything. We color the house. (I will play with) Zuhal (when I go back into the class). I will draw with her. (I helped) Burcu. With the lessons. She is helping me and I help her. (Child 1R, Girl)*

What is striking about the second example above is that the refugee child mentions enjoying the same activities, i.e. drawing and studying, with her refugee peers (Azad and Safa) as she enjoys with her peers from the host community (Zuhal and Burcu), suggesting again that one of the main factors leading to interaction with peers in kindergarten is shared interests or preferences for activities, and children do not necessarily discriminate between children from their own community or the other community when engaging each other in these activities. Although drawing and studying are not exactly play activities, the in-class observations during the study revealed the same patterns for play activities such as lego and hide and seek.

Another striking aspect of refugee children's descriptions of play is that they described being engaged in collaborative pretend play much more frequently than host community children, often with other refugee children, but not always, as the example below shows:

> *I like to play the watermelon game with him (Erdem – host community child). I act as the seller and he comes and buys. (Child 4R, Boy)*

The same child, who talks above about his favorite game with his friend from the host community, described his favorite kitchen game with his refugee peer as follows:

> *It's like I'm the cook and she (Safa – refugee child) takes food to the people. (I cook) anything. Watermelon, juice, strawberry… (Child 4R, Boy)*

Figure 11. *"I act as the seller and he comes and buys" – A drawing by Ubaid*

Refugee children were observed on multiple occasions to be building a house with cushions and other materials, assigning each other roles, engaging in deep conversation during these play episodes and sometimes getting upset with each other through the course of the play - presumably because someone goes off script or does something unexpected.

Finally, as among host community children, some refugee children were play leaders and others followers. One of the followers shared the below account of how one of their play leaders would gatekeep who was allowed entry into play.

> *(I like to play) Hide and Seek (with Ubaid). Isra and Safa sometimes (join us for hide and seek). Just those two I am letting them play with us. Sometimes Ubaid says no for him (Erdem) to play (with us). (Child 3R, Girl)*

4.1.2.4 Experience of communicating with peers from host community

In contrast with children from the host community, only a few of the refugee children indicated in their interviews that they were not understood by host community peers or that they don't understand peers from the host community. None of them gave any

sign of experiencing discomfort or frustration about the issue as refugee children had done in their interviews. One refugee child, an Iraqi one, even insinuated that she rarely spoke Arabic at school:

> *Yes (we can understand each other, while playing with Didem). We talk as they talk. Yes (I speak in Turkish). Sometimes (I speak in Arabic). (Child 3R, Girl)*

The same child's mother had a slightly different account of the situation:

> *(She is) most of the time going to the Arab group, sitting with them. We are telling her to go to the Turkish group, in order to learn the language. Because she needs to know the language. She doesn't know the language. (Parent 3R, Female)*

Syrian parents also shared similar sentiments, confessing that the language barrier was a source of great distress for their children (boys as well as girls) in their social relations. For example:

> *One time I came to a meeting here, there was a girl (a Turkish girl) trying to get closer to him, he was getting away from her. He is crying in the house because he can't understand them. (Parent 4R, Female)*

It thus appears that the refugee children's apparent reluctance to admit or talk about the language barrier was not necessarily because they did not or had not experience(d) it as a challenge, but rather it had been too distressful and also a point of contention with their parents regarding their social habits and acquisition of the Turkish language.

It is also interesting to note that while one of the Turkish parents indicated that her daughter had encountered Arabic before due to her Syrian neighbors, one of the Syrian parents indicated that her daughter had been isolated, from Turkish people presumably, before starting kindergarten and did not earlier know that there are children who speak Turkish and children who speak Arabic.

Finally, a couple of refugee children also indicated that they would like to teach their friend from the host community some Arabic or Farsi. One child even took the opportunity of a Farsi interpreter being present in the classroom to tell her Turkish friend about some words that are similar in Farsi and Turkish, and her friend reportedly listened with interest.

4.1.2.5 Refugee children's interactions with preschool peers outside school

Most of the refugee children indicated meeting children from the class outside of school, including in one instance a child from the host community. For Syrian children, almost two hours of additional together time outside school seemed to be guaranteed by the shared private car they used to get to and from the school. As explained by one child and one parent below, this provided additional opportunities for enjoyment as well as conflict:

> I see them (my friends) in the car. We stay an hour in it. I love it a lot (coming to school with other children). (Child 6R, Boy)

> They spend much time in the car. It is better for her to spend a lot of time with other children. She wants to sit in the front seat next to the driver, but the other children always get there first. (Parent 1R, Girl)

Almost all the Syrian children, and also the Iraqi child, frequently met each other in the park near their apartment as well, and sometimes even at each other's homes. Observations of a couple of parents of these additional play opportunities were as follows:

> *Sometimes we bring her to the park near to our house. She can see Safa and Azad there. And when she sees them, she becomes so happy and active. Each one in a building. But Isra in front of us. And Ubaid after that. Something like this. Park is combining everything. They meet in the park. (Parent 3R, Female)*

> *Every day he is going to the park. (He is playing with) the same children (from school). They are next to us, in the building. Safa. Azad. Aisha, his cousin, and another Zahra. They live next to us. When she Isra comes to our house, they play together every time. Inside the school, they play together. (Parent 4R, Female)*

> *They see their Syrian friends in the park. Rarely they can see their Turkish friends. Because we don't know which times are common for both of them. If it is like a coincidence, they can see them. (Parent 6R, Female)*

While one reason for refugee children not regularly seeing the Turkish children from their class in the park was the lack of coordination on meeting times between Syrian and Turkish families, another reason might be that most of the Turkish children lived a bit further away. The children seemed to be aware of this reality. For example, the Iraqi child said:

Figure 12. *"The park is combining everything.": A drawing by Burcu*

> *(I would like to invite to my house) Ubaid and Isra. Safa sometimes she can come. Didem's house is far from my house. (Child 3R, Girl)*

4.1.2.6 Parental intervention in refugee children's social interactions

The primary way that refugee parents seemed to be engaged in their children's social interactions was through conversations with their children about whom to play with, predominantly urging them to play more with Turkish children. As might already be clear from the findings above, this recommendation from their parents was not really heeded by refugee children due to the language barrier being experienced by the children as intimidating, and ultimately unnecessary given the presence of plenty of Arabic-speaking children. Interestingly however, it emerged that parents from the host community could be influential in this regard. As one Syrian parent explained:

> Ilay's mother. She's too kind. Because of that, she (Safa) is trying to be close to Ilay. Because of her mother. She was too kind with her. She called her in the park. She told her "How are you? How is your mother? Where do you live?" She is expert in communicating with her. (Parent 5R, Female)

In-class observations during the study corroborated that Safa was quite friendly with Ilay. This hints at the power of reciprocity to promote pro-social behaviors. Additionally, Ilay herself was observed as being quite expert at communicating with

the refugee children, frequently using gestures and eye contact to get her point across or understand, which suggests that modeling by parents can have a strong impact on their children's social behaviors.

4.1.3. Summary: How host community children and refugee children are navigating their social interactions

Following the separate analyses of the social interactions of host community children and refugee children in the sub-sections above, this sub-section presents a brief comparative analysis of the findings for each group. Host community children and refugee children were found to have very similar experiences of playing, friendship, conflict and making peace with peers. This suggests that they probably have very similar values and skills for navigation of social interactions with peers and that they could potentially maintain positive relationships with each other if they interacted more frequently. And they are at the same age so developmentally speaking such similarities are expected as well.

Language, specifically emerging Turkish language acquisition among refugee children, prevents frequent engagement of children from the other community for most children. These limitations in the knowledge of the language creates frustration or stress for both parties, either due to their own desires to befriend or play with children from the other community or due to the pressure from their parents to do so. It especially prevents Arabic-speaking refugee children from seeking friendships with host community children, since verbal communication is perceived by them as a critical aspect of friendship as well of the complex play they usually engage in. Much to the disappointment of refugee parents, and discomfort of host community parents and host community children, this creates a vicious cycle in which language limitations impede social interactions between children from the refugee community and children from the host community, and the resulting sparsity of friendships and play with children from the host community perpetuates a state of refugee children not acquiring much Turkish language in preschool.

Finally, it appears that parents can have influence on children's attitudes and behaviors with regard to interacting more frequently or positively with children from the other community. This can be in the form words of encouragement or through modeling with their own behavior. Interestingly, it does not necessarily have to be a child's own parent that influences them. Their peer's parent from own community as well as other community can create more pro-social attitudes and behaviors. In this study, one of the host community parents seemed to have influenced both host community children other than her own and refugee children to behave more positively with each other. Host community parents are therefore not only critical to include in social cohesion initiatives but can also play a very influential role.

The influence of parents and other factors on the children's social relations are described in more detail in Section 4.2.6, after describing the findings on how parents from the two communities navigate their own social relations in the context of school.

4.2 How do parents navigate social interactions in the context of school

In order to answer this research question, I analyzed parents' interviews as well as the interviews with the teacher and the principal. Within the school context, it emerged that the extent of social interaction among parents was minimal unless orchestrated by practical necessity, for example, shared pickup and drop car service for children or initiated by the school such as WhatsApp group, one-on-one meetings requested by the teachers, annual gatherings, and home visits by principal. Furthermore, the social interaction between host community parents and refugee parents was almost non-existent for most of the school year with the exception of celebrations towards the end of the school year.

The data analysis also revealed that the parents' social interactions and inter-group attitudes in the context of school were shaped at least to some extent by social dynamics outside the school, especially in the context of the neighborhood, as well as the wider country context. The language difference was cited as a challenge for inter-group communication by almost all parents, but some issues beyond language were also hinted at by some parents. However, the analysis also revealed some reasons to

be hopeful about improved social dynamics, especially in the longer term. This included a genuine openness and desire on the parents' part for greater social interaction between their children, as well as the potential of the school to foster community.

These findings are summarized in Figure 13 below and more detail on each of these main findings is provided in the subsections below.

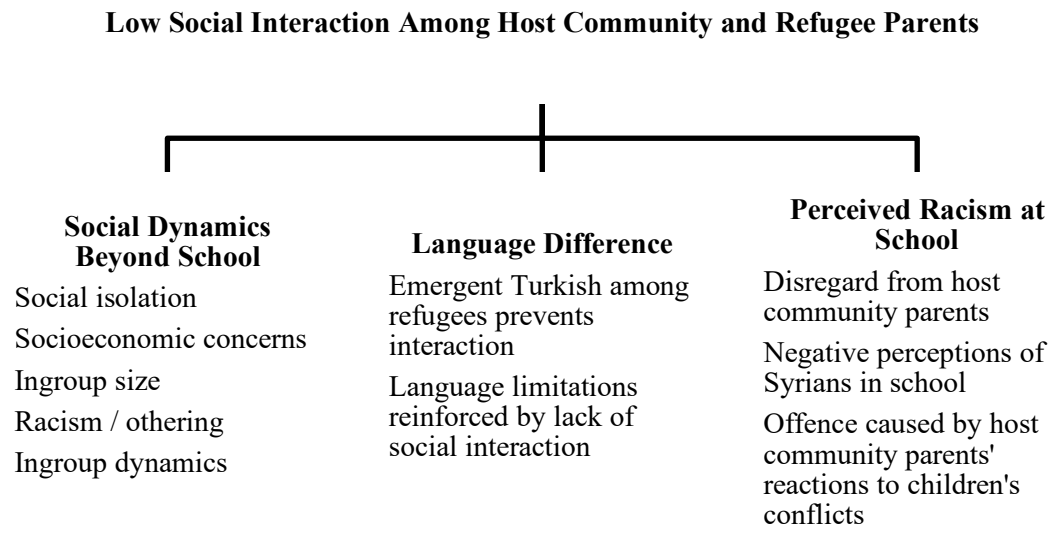


Figure 13. *Parents navigation of cross-group relations in the context of preschool*

4.2.1 Limited social interaction between parents in the context of school

As illustrated by the examples below, parents from the host community shared a consistent experience. They would meet each other outside the school when they came to drop and pick their children, providing opportunities for greetings and brief conversation. They did not have much contact beyond that, primarily due to the distance between their homes. According to one such parent, Covid-19 and the children's illnesses were the main subject of their conversations.

> *As we are far away, when we see each other outside, we say hi. But if we were closer, we would meet, we would do something. (Parent 2H, Female)*

When we see each other outside, we say hi, we talk. But since our homes are quite far away from each other, we cannot visit each other. Just in the school. Zuhal's mom. I speak with Zuhal's mom. I speak with Erdem's mom. There's Burcu. I speak to Burcu's mom. Others I don't really know quite well. (Parent 7H, Female)

I am usually talking with all the non-Syrian ones and I'm good with all of them. We meet outside the school and we usually talk about illnesses and viruses. Corona. Since the school started, we cannot get rid of the illnesses. (Parent 9H, Female)

It is important to note in the above accounts that parents from the host community did not mention seeing or talking to refugee parents. The reason for that is that refugee children in the preschool classes were dropped and picked to/from school by a hired chauffeur. While this meant that these children got lots of additional time with each other, their parents not only did not have a chance to see each other, they could also not have the regular opportunity to meet parents from the host community nor the school administration. In fact, this was also one of the main reasons, we had to forego baseline interviews with parents because it would have been inconvenient to ask them to come to the school for interviews twice within a span of two months.

The refugee parents own accounts of interaction with other parents revealed more varied experiences of interaction with other parents, although not much more extensive, as illustrated by the examples below. While they too did not mention interacting with parents from the host community, it emerged that they did not interact with each other much either. And when they did, it was for quite specific purposes like coordinating car arrangements or requesting help with translation.

We just say hi to each other. I don't have relations with them. We have just relations with Isra's father. We are asking him just specific questions. Because he knows Turkish. Something about Zahra's coming to school. (Parent 3R, Female)

Relationship is just for car and when a problem happens. (Parent 1R, Female)

With Isra's mother, once a week we meet. With others, no. (Parent 4R, Female)

They are there (at the park) but I don't communicate with them. They have their own group, I don't get into their group. (Parent 3R, Female)

As mentioned in the above examples, there was only one instance of friendship indicated between two Syrian parents, while the Iraqi parent indicated a mutual aloofness when she met Syrian parents in the park. This parent indicated that the Syrian parents had a group of their own, but this might be just her own perception because the Syrian parents did not indicate any group friendships or associations or the group she encountered might include other members who were not parents from this particular classroom or school. It should however be noted that that there were three pairs of refugee children in the class who were cousins (i.e. 6 out of the 9 refugee children in the class, 4 of whom lived in the same building). Thus, the group observed by the Iraqi parent might be constituted of relatives rather than friends per se.

For some parents, refugees and host community alike, health issues resulted in missed opportunities for interacting with other parents. In their own words:

> *Before we didn't know them, we didn't meet with them. Now is the first time we meet with them in this meeting (today). They are too kind. It is the first time we can be closer to them. Because we gave birth around that time (the beginning of the school year), we couldn't come (to the meeting organized by the school then). (Parent 6R, Female)*

> *We are dealing with some sicknesses since the beginning of the school. Ipek's body is so sensitive. If she comes to school five days, two days of these days she is sick. So we don't have a lot of chance to meet the parents. (Parent 7H, Female)*

For other parents, certain circumstances such as their children's adaptation problems or later pick-up times for older children, created additional opportunities for social interaction at the school, especially with the teacher and the principal. For example:

> *Many times I came to the school, I met with the teacher because of Azad. Because she said he was crying too much. She said you should do something in order to decrease his time of crying that much. I like her too much. (Parent 5R, Female)*

> *As you know, I have a kid in 3A. I am at here at 12 usually. And you can see me, I am waiting for them. I am talking with the principals and teachers. I have a good relation(ship) with all of them. They are all nice. (Parent 9H, Female)*

As obvious in the parents' accounts above, these opportunities for social interaction fostered goodwill and positive social feelings. Perhaps because she was well aware of this, the teacher lamented her inability to organize parent gatherings due to the

pandemic or even to involve parent volunteers in class activities. However, her attempts to establish caring relations, as well as the principal's, did not go unnoticed by parents from both communities. They appreciated them immensely and even tried to reciprocate. For example:

> *My relation with them (the school administration) is perfect, because once principal came to my house. Because of my daughter. He gave her an aid in Ramazan. (Parent 1R, Female)*

> *We really love our teacher. Selin Hoca is a really nice person. Our communication is really good. When I was sick, she always asked me how am I, how's it going? A couple of days ago, her kid was sick, so I asked her about her kid. Our communication is really good. (Parent 7H, Female)*

Finally, in terms of interaction over social media, the teacher explained that while they did have a WhatsApp group with all the parents, with one Syrian child's father helping to translate Turkish content into Arabic, parents did not communicate in the group. Only she wrote and they replied privately. One refugee parent indicated that she was using Google translate for her replies to the teacher but she wasn't satisfied with the quality of the translation.

4.2.2 Social dynamics outside the school that might be shaping parents' social interactions and attitudes in the school context

Parents from both refugee and host communities alluded to experiencing relative social isolation more generally, due to the pandemic, and in the case of refugee parents, also due to displacement. This could potentially explain a lack of enthusiasm or initiative by the parents to seek social interactions generally, including in the context of school.

> *It's hard to meet someone new. Because everyone is alone. Everyone is isolated in this society. So if he's not your relative, it's hard to meet them, to be friends with them. (Parent 6R, Female)*

> *Due to the virus, as you know, we didn't have a lot of chances to have friends. (Parent 7H, Female)*

In the country context of Türkiye specifically too, socio-economic concerns were shared by parents from both communities. As illustrated by the examples below, these

ranged from racism to inflation, as well as a general distrust of others. As with the experiences of social isolation mentioned above, these concerns could be hindering social interactions in the context of school.

> *The racism against Syrians has increased, especially after the killing of one Turkish guy by a Syrian. (Parent 1R, Female)*

> *In terms of neighbors, we don't have close relationships…(W)e wouldn't actually trust anyone in these hard times. No one would trust anyone with their kids. (Parent 9H, Female)*

When asked about social cohesion, one host community parent said:

> *May the God help us reach a nice ending, because I don't believe our ending would be nice. Everything is more expensive. Even the gas. Some days we even say that she should just walk to school. (Parent 2H, Female)*

According to one refugee parent, another important reality about the social context in Türkiye was that the Syrian community was large enough that people could have the minimum required social relations within their own community so they were not too motivated to cultivate social relations with the host community and vice versa. In his own words:

> *Each society (community), like the Syrian and Turkish society has enough. It doesn't need to interact with the other society. When the Turkish people see the noisy things in the park, they say no, no need to interact with them, they are too noisy. Again, the Syrian families, when they see these racism actions from Turkish, they say no need to interact with them. (Parent 8R, Male)*

Refugee parents, Syrian and Iraqi alike, seemed particularly concerned about the prevailing social dynamics, with several of them sharing negative social observations or experiences with host community members in their neighborhoods. They lamented problems with integration, as well as cultural differences and discriminatory behaviors. Some examples are included below:

> *Our situation is ok. We can live. But our integration in society is not good. Sometimes we have some problems with our neighbors. (Parent 3R, Female)*

> *It's too harsh (living in a diverse community). Language is a challenge. Lifestyle is different. (Parent 5R, Female)*

One of them said "No, they are strange (yabancı)." In our neighborhood, we saw this a lot. Eighty percent make distinctions. In their actions." (Parent 8R, Male)

It's a hard experience. I went to the swimming pool. Every Thursday there is a swimming course. My daughter is trying to communicate with them, but they are pulling themselves away from her. She is trying to get closer to the, but they go far away from her. (Parent 4R, Female)

Interestingly, poor social relations were not just observed across refugee and host communities. Even within the Syrian community, there appeared to be some rifts between families. The school principal observed this as follows:

It's a broad spectrum. There are Syrian families who get along really well with each other. And others who don't like each other. There are families who put guilt on each other even about the war in Syria actually. (School Principal)

It is important to take note of such ingroup dynamics and heterogeneity within the communities, as well as to refrain from generalizing cross-group attitudes and behaviors reported in the study.

4.2.3 The language difference as a limiting factor for social interaction between parents

As with the children, language was one of the most frequently cited barriers for parents' social interactions in the school context. Refugee parents seemed to be on a broad spectrum in terms of their attitudes and competencies with regard to the Turkish language. The teacher indicated some awareness of this and explained that the majority of refugee mothers understood Turkish but could not speak. Meanwhile the school principal surmised the following about refugee families' knowledge and attitudes and how this relates to social integration:

There are some Syrian students who know Turkish and some who don't. The majority of the problem comes from those who don't. They have some adaptation problems and family is an important part of this. Some parents want their children to learn Turkish and some don't. And some want to learn Turkish themselves and some don't. Their ideology/mind mirrors itself on the children. (School Principal)

The conversations with refugee parents revealed that not only are they all, without exception, deeply interested in their children learning Turkish, but they are also interested to learn Turkish themselves. They recognize that they can benefit from knowing the language, most importantly to understand and speak to people, especially when they interface with public services, i.e. schools and hospitals. They emerged as being at various stages of the language acquisition journey, ranging from "Until now I couldn't learn any Turkish word" to "I don't have a problem with language." They also shared some interesting aspects of their struggles:

> *Turkish language is hard and I don't have a network where I live. I say hi to someone, it's hard for them to reply to me. (Parent 4R, Female)*
>
> *When we go to courses to learn Turkish, they just talk to us in Turkish. We need someone to say it in Arabic in order to understand it better. (Parent 3R, Female)*
>
> *My wife goes to two courses and she is very well learned but when we not used the language she's forget it. She can understand, but she can't speak. Because there is not communicate between us. Our neighbors Syrian, who's above us. Next to us Syrian. Down (below) Syrian. We are not needed to speak in Turkish. (Parent 8R, Male)*
>
> *I want to speak, I want to be part of this community, but I become shy. I scared I will make mistakes. If I mistake, maybe important thing or not. For that, I don't speak in this time. I shy. But when he asks me, I answer, and conversation, we conversation. (Parent 8R, Male)*

Considering these testimonies, it becomes clear that there is a circular relationship between Turkish language acquisition and social interaction with the host community. A lack of regular social interaction is a barrier for language acquisition just as much as limited language skills are a barrier for social interaction. This might also be why refugee parents who are not forced to interact with the school do not develop their Turkish language skills, and those who do interact do develop, even in the course of a few months.

As explained by the refugee father in the final example above, if host community members initiate conversation, interaction develops. Once interaction develops, language limitations are eventually overcome. In the words of the same father:

> *We are now in Türkiye. I speak Turkish more with them then Syrians in the Turkish faculty in Syria. Because I take the language from the Turkish people. They are not teachers. But I can speak more than (the people learning Turkish in Syria from teachers). (Parent 8R, Male)*

The attitudes of some host community parents suggest that they could be willing to participate in social interactions despite language limitations and they are sympathetic to the language struggles of their refugee counterparts. For example:

> *We moved here two years ago and we didn't have any hardships. Most of the foreign kids know Turkish actually. If they don't know the language, we are communicating with sign language, and it's ok, we have no problems. As you know we have some Syrian kids at the school. Most of them actually learnt Turkish. They know Turkish. (Parent 7H, Female)*

> *And as you know, Turkish and Arabic are so different and they are so difficult for each other… (T)his is their own language. As a Turkish, I don't go for a foreign language. When they talk Turkish, I understand them a little bit, but they are also going for their own language. (Parent 9H, Female)*

They are even generous enough to interpret instances in which refugee children are being naughty as instances of experiencing difficulties with the language. For example:

> *But the Syrian kids don't understand and the don't listen, because when they listen they don't understand. They are going around the garden and when the teacher says "We have to go into the class" they don't understand and the language barrier is quite hard. (Parent 9H, Female)*

Yet they also experience frustration from the language barrier. In the words of the same mother:

> *Of course our religion is a religion of ease and we would also include anyone and everyone. However, they don't understand us and we don't understand them. So it would be amazing if we understand each other. It's both ways we cannot understand each other, so it would be better if we do that. (Parent 9H, Female)*

4.2.4 Perceived racism in the school context

Several refugee parents indicated that language was not the only reason that limited social interactions between the parents. They alluded to a variety of related factors such as a lack of acceptance on the part of parents from the host community. Their

accounts of these issues were supported by the observations of the teacher and principal.

> *I don't communicate with the Turkish ones. We say hi to each other but we don't go far too much. I don't have a problem with language. But if someone doesn't want to get closer to me, I don't go closer. (Parent 1R, Female)*

> *Actually there is no tension that we can talk about, but some Turkish parents are disregarding (the refugee parents), but I don't want to say completely disregard, but when they are together in the same environment, they act like the others don't exist. (Teacher)*

The lack of acceptance described by the parent and teacher above hint at an unspoken resistance on the part of host community parents to accept refugees as part of the school community. Sometimes the resistance might be articulated more clearly, in this case by a member from the host community to the parent of a Syrian child who participated in the study. This Syrian parent was the neighbor of a staff member from the host community and shared the following anecdote:

> *She (member of school staff) is my next door (neighbour). Come to us "Can I take this?" She borrowed something. And one time she come to us "Knock knock. I want to drink coffee." (We said) "Hos geldiniz, come here!" She stayed half hour. When I come to (this) school, everyone knows. [S]he speak about [me] "He is too good man. I don't like Syrians. But this family is too good. I go to them. They are my neighbours for four years. There is not one problem happen between us." But when I look. All the neighbours not make a problem with this woman. But she came to my home and not go to other homes. (She is) saying "No you are not Syrian, you are like the Turkish." This one (woman), don't know any Syrian, just me, and say that! She don't know anything about the Syrians… (Parent 8R, Male)*

Another barrier that limits positive social interaction between refugee parents and host community parents is the latter's reactions to children's conflicts. It might be a small proportion that does this, but if and when they do, it seems to offend the refugee parents and adversely affect their perception of host community parents. As one parent and the principal explained:

> *Too many of parents, especially from Turkish families, doesn't want their children to be in (mixed) groups inside the class. Sometimes when one child is getting hurt, many of the parents start to make a problem "How you (teacher) let so (let it happen)?" In my experience, when my daughter has fallen, or get hurt, but I didn't say anything, because it's normal." (Parent 1R, Female)*

> *There is also a small group of parents, this group is actually quite small but when their kid actually fights with another kid, they especially ask if this kid is Syrian or Turkish. And when they hear the kid is Syrian, they react more. There is such a group, unfortunately. They usually fight with the principals. They are asking "Why are they here? Why there are a lot of Syrian students in the school?" (School Principal)*

However, it should be noted that such dynamics are not restricted to Syrian-Turkish relations. For example, an Iraqi parent shared her experience of a perceiving a similar lack of acceptance by Syrian parents.

> *No, I can speak Syrian very well. My husband can speak the Syrian dialect very well, especially the Damascus one. And I don't speak the Iraqi language (dialect) in order to let people understand me, especially with people from Syria. When we speak to someone from Baghdad, we change our dialect to Baghdad. Same as that. Sometimes we need someone to translate for us, we ask parents of Syrian children, but they don't like to come with us. (Parent 3R, Female)*

Even within the Syrian community, sometimes offence is taken from each other, pointing again to heterogeneity within communities. For example, the teacher described a recent incident:

> *I said that "I don't want my Syrian parents to be shy, to stay in the back." And Bilal Bey translated, I don't know how he translated it, but he wrote something like "You embarrassed us, and may God embarrass you" but as a joke, it was as a funny joke. But I translated it in Google, it said something different "You snitched us, so God also snitch you" something like that. In Turkish, the equivalent is different. But I don't know how they understand. Rabab's parents said that "Who is the translator? Why is he using inappropriate words? How can he write such a thing?" I asked "I don't know Arabic, is there a problem?" He said that "He doesn't know how to talk appropriately to the group." Maybe they were bothered by that and maybe that's why Rabab's mom/parent didn't come. I also think that they are already not that open to communication actually.*

The most interesting aspect of this incident is that it highlights an attempt by one parent to address what he perceived as a bad reputation of Syrian parents, even though it was not intended by the teacher as such; she was merely trying to be supportive and encouraging of refugee parents. It might be the case that living in an environment characterized by lack of acceptance was breeding insecurity and prompting offensive behavior towards one's own in-group.

4.2.5 Enabling factors for improving social interactions between parents

The school's capacity to break divides and foster community between all parents is recognized:

> *When we will be in one class, one salon, one hall, everything is good. There is not problems. I saw that many places. Like for example, this party on Friday, everything was too good. The Turkish women made food for us and gave in our hands…But when we stay together: "Look at this Syrian woman! Look at this Syrian man!" From here it's… (Parent 8R, Male)*

Furthermore, although harboring different opinions on the desirability of mixed schools, refugee parents and host community parents seem to have accepted them for now, and both are keen for refugee children to learn Turkish so that the children can mingle and learn with ease:

> *I saw this is the most good plan what happened. Because they are make the children together. Isra now can speak, not too much, but she can speak, she can understand. Because what she hears and what goes in her ears, this way the most good… If they learn Turkish, there is no problem. It's like they are in Syria. They are part of this community. (Parent 8R, Male)*

> *As they are foreigners, communication is a little hard.. A separated school might be better but we don't have these opportunities right now. But the only problem is they don't know the language. If they would understand, they would include them also in their group.(Parent 9H, Female)*

4.2.6 A theoretical look at the interconnectedness of parents' and children's social attitudes and behaviors

Having analyzed both children's and parents' own navigation of social relations at school, as well as parents' attitudes towards their children's social relations, I also then examined the interconnectedness of these using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development. This sub-section presents the findings from that analysis.

At the most macro level, the factors that were mentioned by participants as being relevant to social cohesion were religion, education policy and inflation. Religion was invoked as both a shared value, as well as a moral guide for maintaining an inclusive and generous outlook towards outgroup members. On the other hand, inflation was invoked as a worrisome preoccupation that was making it challenging for parents to

allocate capital to daily needs like fuel to drop the child off at school, with the result that thinking about or spending on social activities with other families was not a priority. With regard to the education policy of including refugee children in the public education system, potential benefits and risks were both recognized. This has also been acknowledged in other refugee hosting contexts (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018).

Within this macrosystem, there were factors in the children's exosystems such as siblings' social experiences, as well as in their other microsystems such as parent-led social experiences and neighborhood social experiences, that were consistently found to influence children's intergroup relations in the microsystem of school, as did their own individual characteristics.

In order to illustrate the different ways in which these dynamics can transpire, examples of 4 specific nanosystems are presented in Figure 14 and discussed in more detail below. For countering deficit-based narratives, most of the selected examples are ones that highlight positive forms of intergroup contact as well as children's own agency in the development of intergroup attitudes and skills.

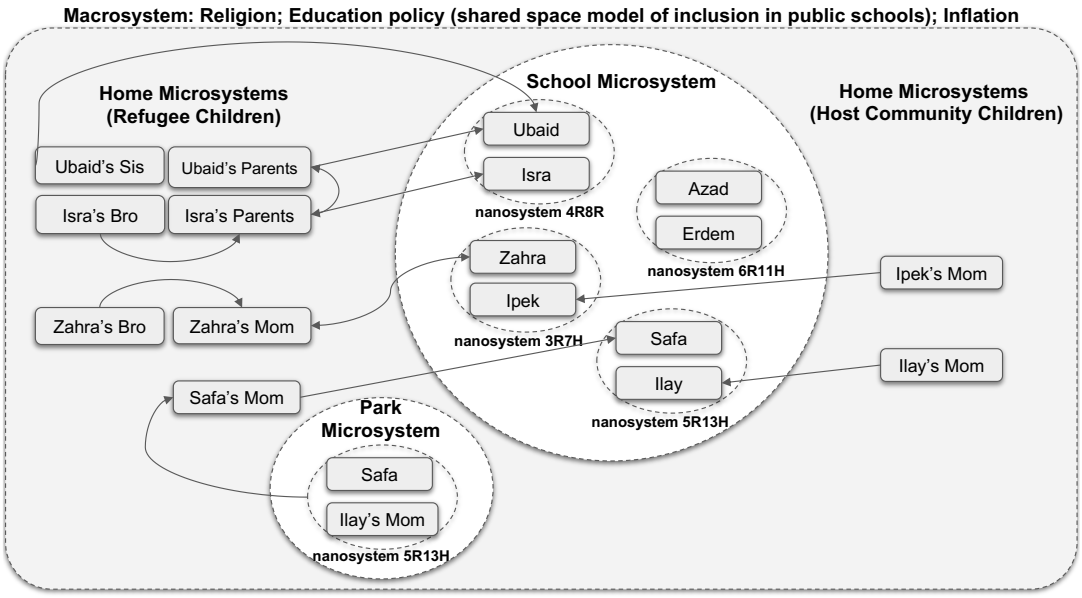


Figure 14. *Interconnectedness of parents' and children's social relations*

Example 1: Nanosystem 4R8R: Familiarity with ingroup members as a driver of ingroup focus of refugee children's social interactions in the class

Nanosystem 4R8R refers to the interactions between Child 4R (Ubaid) and Child 8R (Isra). Both refugee children, they were often observed conversing, playing and eating together, along with other refugee children. Ubaid even proclaiming at one point to other refugee children that "I only like Isra", much to the disappointment of these other children vying for his approval. One of the play leaders among refugee children, Ubaid's Turkish skills were more advanced than other refugee children and he was observed attempting to interpret for his friends several times during the study. He had an older sister in the school whose Turkish was more advanced and she seemed to take a keen interest in her brother and would interact with him during breaks. Isra too had an older brother at the school, and although more aloof and quiet than Ubaid, often opting for solitary play, she tended to spend her time among refugee children rather than host community children. Towards the end of the study, it emerged that the parents of Ubaid and Isra were not just neighbors but also friends and the two families would visit each other at least once a week. This example illustrates that despite strong personalities of their own, which they did express in various ways, Ubaid and Isra were ultimately influenced by their parents' friendship, in the sense that the familiarity established between the families outside of school seeped into the children's interactions at school, leaving little motivation to seek out host community friends, even though these two children had the biggest advantage over their other refugee peers in terms of Turkish language skills. While friendship between parents was rare, this being the only example uncovered during the study, other refugee children experienced similar patterns of familiarity due to having cousins in the class.

Example 2: Nanosystem 3R7H: Bidirectionality of influence on intergroup attitudes and behaviors between children and their parents

Nanosystem 3R7H refers to the interactions between Child 3R (Zahra) from the refugee community and Child 7H (Ipek) from the host community. Parents of both girls were strong proponents of intergroup relations between their children, with Parent 7H encouraging Ipek to value different cultures and Parent 3R encouraging Zahra to interact more with Turkish children so that she would learn the Turkish language.

Parent 3R indicated that her older son's relations with his Turkish peers and host community improved significantly once he learnt the Turkish language, an experience shared also by other refugee parents with older children. While these two girls indicated positive attitudes towards the outgroup language and intergroup contact, their interaction was primarily in the form of building lego structures together since the language barrier did not allow for more communicative forms of play. It appears that their parents' encouragement had influenced their attitudes and they found a way to interact that they were comfortable with. On another occasion, Ipek reportedly requested Parent 7H that they should accompany another refugee child while she waited for her brother, an act of kindness that her mother supported and appreciated. This example illustrates that the parents and children can both influence each other with regard to attitudes on intergroup contact and positive actions can reinforce positive attitudes in a virtuous cycle. It is also worth noting that the children in this example heeded their parents' advice on greater intergroup contact but only in ways they were comfortable to do so. Many other children in the class did not find a comfortable way to do so and therefore did not oblige their parents.

Example 3: Nanosystem 5R10H: Children's individual characteristics and independent experiences influencing their intergroup attitudes and behaviors

Nanosystem 5R10H refers to the interactions observed between Child 5R (Safa) from the refugee community and Child 10H (Ilay) from the host community. Both girls were among the most advanced in the class in terms of both cognitive development and were frequently seen interacting with each other during literacy activities, as well as class games organized by the teacher. This was a striking intergroup relationship because Safa was deeply embedded in the refugee children's group in the class, which was not accessible to Ilay due to the medium of conversation being Arabic. She had indicated frustration to the researcher about this and appeared to have come up with other ways to materialize her desire to interact with refugee children, including with Safa. She made frequent eye contact and used gestures to make herself understood, and Safa reciprocated these whereas most others did not. This example illustrates that children's individual characteristics such as cognitive development can affect the outcomes of intergroup contact. Additionally, Parent 5R reported that Parent 10H communicated

kindly and effectively with Safa in the neighborhood park and this was motivating Safa to make an effort to interact with Ilay. This demonstrates how children's social experiences outside the school can carry into their social experiences inside the class.

Example 4: Nanosystem 6R11H: Children's behavioral dispositions and language abilities influencing the nature of their intergroup contact

Nanosystem 6R11H refers to the interactions between Child 6R (Azad) from the refugee community and Child 11H (Erdem) from the host community. Erdem consistently indicated that Azad was his friend and the two were frequently observed jumping and dancing together. While Azad never indicated Erdem as his friend, he did seem to enjoy engaging in these activities and interacting positively with Erdem on these occasions. At the same time, the two boys were often observed fighting as well. According to the teacher's observations this was due to their mismatched temperaments; Azad liked to play in a calmer way while Erdem preferred rough and tumble play. She explained that because they could not communicate with each other because of the language difference, she believed this would then lead to Azad feeling threatened when Erdem began to play more roughly, and he would then retaliate aggressively. Such episodes would upset Azad immensely who would then cry and sulk for much of the day. However, Erdem continued to maintain a positive attitude towards him and would engage him again the next day. Parent 6R had been invited the teacher to discuss her child's sensitivity, yet she maintained a very positive attitude towards the teacher and towards the host community.

As a whole, these examples illustrate that there are both ecological and biopsychological factors that affect children's interactions with members of the outgroup, and that children encounter numerous proximal processes within and outside school on a daily basis that have the potential to advance their social attitudes and behaviors. Each child's trajectory will be a different one based on who is involved in these proximal processes and how these transpire. It points to the importance of including both parents and children in interventions aimed at improving intergroup relations, as well as to the reality that everyone will receive the intervention differently.

4.3 How members of the school community respond to the implementation

The data sources used to answer this question were the interviews with the children, the parents, the teacher and the principal. Observations of the children, their drawings and the story inputs provided by the families were additional data sources. The findings for children, parents and educators are summarized in tables before the detailed findings for each of these groups is presented. Table 5 below presents the main findings on children's responses to the participatory adapted bibliotherapy intervention.

4.3.1 How children from the host community responded to the intervention

4.3.1.1 A sense of joy, achievement and representation

Almost all children from the host community indicated that they liked the books about Khaled and Eren, especially the second one, primarily due to the inclusion of their drawings and their friends' drawings.

Parents indicated that the children were very excited to see the drawings and showed them to their friends and relatives in addition to their parents. For example:

> *Burcu liked it so much. And she showed "This is my picture. Qimti put my picture here." And she was so happy about it… Because it includes a part of them, so when they look at it, they loved it…. She is showing the pictures to everyone, like her grandpa, her aunt. And she is saying "Do you have a foreign teacher? We have a foreign teacher. And she actually published a book for us that includes our own drawings. Do you have it?" (Parent 9H, Female)*

Children themselves too tried to explain why they liked seeing their drawings in the second book. For example:

> *Because we drew them. And when we see it, we were happy. (Child 2H, Girl)*

Thus, the joy seems to stem from a combination of achievement, representation and agency. The latter was also evident from criticisms of their own and others' drawings:

Table 5. *Children's responses to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

Intervention Response	Host Community Children	Refugee Children
Joy, achievement and representation	– Excited to see own and peers' drawings in book. – Felt a sense of achievement and representation due to inclusion of own illustrations in second book. – Indicated a sense of agency through critical appreciation of own and others' drawings.	– Excited to see own and peers' drawings in book. – Felt a sense of representation and achievement due to inclusion of own illustrations in second book. – Appreciated the fun aspects of the narrative that aligned with own interests such as playing football in school or visiting the seaside.
Engagement with book characters and stories	– Fascinated with the characters of Khaled and Eren and took initiative to draw them during the endline interview. – A couple of host community children attended to Khaled's Syrian identity but more attention and meaning was afforded to the perceived differences in height or age. – Did not share experiences of reading the books at home.	– Fascinated with the characters of Khaled and Eren and took initiative to draw them during the endline interview. – Did not attend to the Syrian/Turkish identities of Khaled/Eren but perceived differences in height or age. – Shared experiences of reading books at home with parents; a couple of parents reported that their child struggled to understand the story,

Table 5 (continued). *Children's responses to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

Intervention Response	Host Community Children	Refugee Children
Reactions to the use of non-native language in the book	– Indicated comfort with the use of Arabic language in the book and in the group-based reading of the stories.	– Had trouble understanding the written Arabic in the book; parents had to translate it into spoken Arabic. – Indicated comfort with the use of Turkish in the book and in the group-based reading of the stories; expressed a desire to learn Turkish.
Engagement with the intervention process	– Enjoyed drawing, playing games and taking the books home. – A few of them could focus during the storytelling session. – Most of them could not recall the stories during the endline interview.	– Enjoyed drawing, playing games, taking the books home, as well as talking to the researcher and interpreter. – Most of them could not focus during the story telling session.

She said that "I wish we did the drawings a little better!" She didn't quite like the drawings. She said she would make them better. (Parent 2H, Female)

In appreciating the drawings too, they did not discriminate on the basis of who made them; whether they were made by their friends and other peers, or peers from their own community and the other community. They seemed to be more objective in their criticism. For example:

I only didn't like the page where Isra drew some lines. It's only just some sketches, some random thing. (Child 7H, Girl)

4.3.1.2 Engagement with the book characters and stories

Host community children indicated liking both books and expressed their fascination with the characters in interesting ways. Some of them said that they would draw Khaled and Eren during their endline interview, even though they were asked to draw their play time.

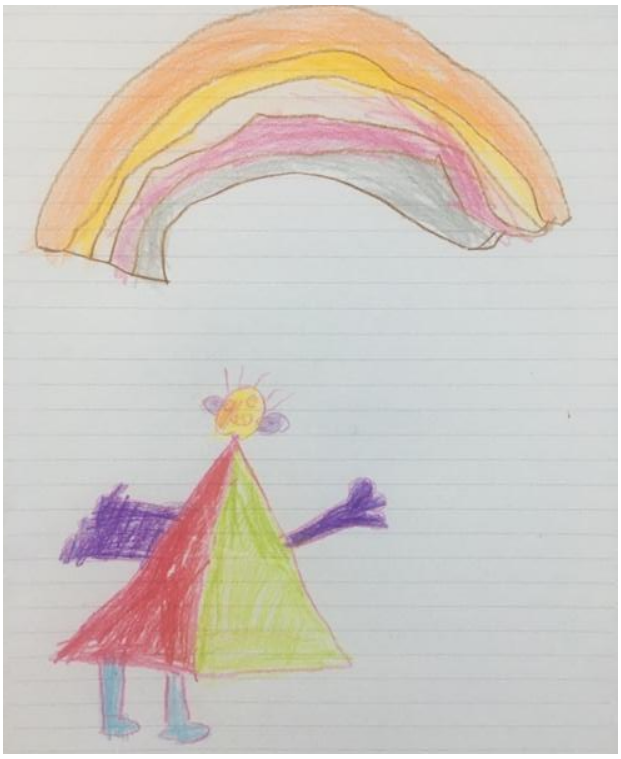


Figure 15. *"Eren trying to catch the rainbow"- A drawing by Ipek*

Figure 16. *"Khaled and Eren playing hide and seek" – A drawing by Ilay*

One child, with a quite rich imagination, said the following:

> *I loved Damla and Erai… Damla made the water warmer. And they went into the water and it was warm and they said thank you to the sister. (Child 10H, Girl)*

When asked about what was going on in the stories or about specific takeaway messages of the stories, most host community children indicated that they did not know or could not recall. The ones who responded substantively, recalled Eren being bullied by other children and helped by Khaled, or the two friends studying together or going to the seaside.

> *His friends said that they are not seeing any monsters, so they told him "You're afraid. You're afraid of monsters. Chicken!" and he was so sad. Eren's friends wouldn't let him play basketball with them, and Khaled, Syrian Khaled, believed in him. (Child 10H, Girl)*

> *They went to their Syrian friends' home. They studied. They went to the seaside I suppose. Khaled's father took them. Khaled is swimming fast and Eren is swimming fast, that's what I think. (Child 7H, Girl)*

The above responses were also the only two responses where the children themselves alluded to the characters being from the refugee community. But even so, they did not focus on that aspect when recalling the characters' actions. For example:

Yes they are helping each other but they are older (points out Khaled and Eren's relative heights in the illustration of the two friends below). (Child 10H, Girl)

Figure 17. *Excerpt from Book 1: Khaled and Eren Become Friends*

She focused on his height, and implied age, rather than his Syrian-ness, which is consistent with the children's general attention to appearances and lack of attention to refugee status or nationality or ethnicity. However, when asked directly about the presence of Syrian children in the class, almost all host community replied in the affirmative, some of them adding "a lot!"

4.3.1.4 Reactions to the use of Arabic language in the book

With regard to the use of Arabic language in the book and reading of the stories in both languages in the class, there were some interesting reactions from host community children. For example, one child pointed to the Arabic text in the book and said that it was Erdem-language (his own name) and insisted that the Arabic interpreter was reading to him and not to the Syrian children. Another child recalled that they read the story in both Turkish and Arabic, and when probed, how she felt about that, she said it felt nice to hear Arabic language. This is an unexpected finding but understandable considering the high number of refugees in the class, school and neighborhood. It was not something entirely new for them. They had heard the language before, including from their refugee peers in the class.

4.3.1.4 Engagement with the intervention process

The use of the photo elicitation technique with host community children to talk about the process of the intervention revealed that they enjoyed participating in the various activities related to the intervention even though they did not always understand the purpose of the activity or take away the intended message. The circle game in which they passed around in sync with the music playing seemed to be the most popular aspect of the process, but it was not clear whether it was enjoyable due to the interactive nature, the illustration of the monster on the box or another reason.

4.3.1.5 Friend patterns after the implementation of the intervention

In terms of changes in indicated friendships and play partners following the intervention (see Table 1 in Annex F1), only one of the host community girls who had not indicated any refugee friends at baseline indicated two refugee girls as friends and another indicated them as playmates or allies. They did not elaborate on these new social developments, and it is impossible to infer with any certainty if it had anything to do with the intervention. However, it should be noted that the first girl confessed liking the drawings of her new refugee "friends" before she confirmed them as friends to the researcher. Perhaps it was due to the leading nature of the question in this context but there is also a possibility that the refugee girls' drawing ability made them more favorable to their peers.

4.3.2 How children from the refugee community responded to the intervention

4.3.2.1 A sense of joy, achievement and representation

As with children from the host community, most children from the refugee community indicated liking the second book more because it included their drawings and their friends' drawings. They concentrated more on the drawings than the story and they were eager to point out their friends' drawings to their parents as well. Similar to host community children, they alluded to feelings of representation and achievement. Their

parents confirmed the children's excitement about the drawings, but also mentioned some other factors shaping their preferences of the stories. For example:

> *She liked the second one. Because she likes to go out. In this book, they went to the sea, they went in the car. In the first one, it was inside the school. She doesn't like to be in the school. So, she liked the second one. (Parent 5R, Female)*

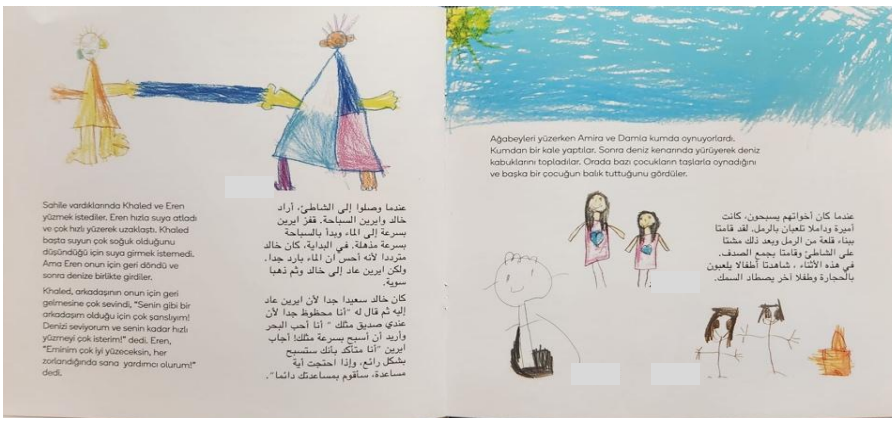


Figure 18. *Excerpt from Book 2: Khaled and Eren Go to the Seaside*

> *He liked the first one because he likes school. When we tell him, there is school today, you should go to school, he feels very happy. He likes to play football inside the school, do the activities inside the school. So he liked the first one more. (Parent 6R, Female)*

4.3.2.2 Engagement with the book characters and stories

The fact that the children's interests were shaping their preferences might indicate a deeper engagement with the stories than emerged from discussions with host community children and their parents. Several refugee children and parents elaborated on their reading experiences of the books at home. For example:

> *Yes, I read it (the book). I read it every day. My mother reads it. And we repeat after her. (Child 1R, Girl)*

> *My mom read it to me. She told me everything in the book. I liked it. It makes me feel like I'm on a mountain. I like reading (stories). It makes me feel like I'm on a mountain, reading (stories). (Child 5R, Girl)*

> *He said "Mom, I couldn't understand it, can you repeat it?" I repeated it. He didn't give any comment about it. I asked him "what did you understand?" He said "I don't know." (Parent 4R, Female)*

Their accounts indicate variations in enjoyment and understanding of the stories, with both boys especially struggling to understand and asking their mothers to repeat the story. Refugee parents explained that the written Arabic was complicated for them because they had never encountered it before and they had to repeat it in spoken Arabic. The teacher offered an interesting insight that the number of characters in the second book was difficult for children to keep track of, especially since children at this age struggle to name relatives by relationship.

A particularly interesting finding was that even refugee children did not make a strong association with the ethnicity/nationality of the characters or identify with them on that basis. They mixed up the names, e.g. Khaled saw a monster or Eren said I will help you with the studies, not necessarily perceiving the refugee character as the provider of help in the first story. One refugee boy, with a similar relative height to the character of Eren, indicated that he liked Eren more because he was small, which aligns with the children's attention to factors such as appearance. The relative sizes of the two characters were also mentioned by one of the two refugee children who chose to draw Khaled and Eren during the endline interview: "This is baby Eren and this is big Khaled," she said.

Figure 19. *"Baby Eren and Big Khaled" – A drawing by Aisha*

Figure 20. *"Khaled and Eren lifting the couch" – A drawing by Nahla*

4.3.2.3 Reactions to the use of Arabic language in the book

Another interesting finding was the refugee children's attitudes towards reading the stories in two languages in the class. One of them indicated that she read the story with the teacher in Turkish and was shown pictures by the interpreter (Arabic reader). Another indicated that it would be normal to read it only in Turkish even though she admitted that she understood it better in Arabic. A third indicated that she understood more in Turkish and then added "in order to learn." This was also an unexpected finding, but the children's indifferent attitude to Arabic and positive attitude towards Turkish seemed to be a reflection of what they heard from their parents and what they experienced in the school.

4.3.2.3 Friend patterns after the implementation of the intervention

In terms of changes in indicated friendships and play partners following the intervention (see Table E2 in Appendix E), only one refugee girl indicated an

additional host community girl as a playmate - not a friend. Refugee children were less likely to have indicated host community children as friends even at baseline.

4.3.3 How parents from the host community responded to the intervention

This section details the findings on the responses of the host community parents to the participatory adapted bibliotherapy intervention. However, first Table 6 below summarizes the findings on this topic for parents from both communities.

Out of the six parents from the host community who agreed to participate in the study, three of them sent inputs for the second story and all of them were mothers. Two of these further participated in the study by coming in for interviews with the researcher at the school, as did one other who is a mother who was not able to send inputs due to childcare, while it was not possible to schedule an interview with the third parent from the host community who sent inputs[6]. This subsection is based on the analysis of their story inputs and interview transcripts.

4.3.3.1 Host community parents' reactions to the first book

During their interviews, host community parents did not say much about the first book specifically. Only the parent who was not able to send inputs for the second book alluded to the first book and she had the following to say:

> *I just took a look. But due to the kids, I don't have a lot of time…One was about like limiting (kısıtlama) the friendship, it was something about that, and the one was about helping each other and I liked that so much, the one in which Eren became friends. But other than that, I don't have a lot of information. (Parent 9H, Female)*

This might suggest that the first book did not resonate with them or perhaps they did not like it. However, they did extend on several themes from the first book in their inputs for the second book and these are discussed further in the subsections below.

[6] It should also be noted that out of two participants who neither sent inputs for the second story nor came in for interviews, one of them was indicated as never participating in school activities by the teacher, while the other one busy with childcare.

Table 6. *Parents' responses to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

Intervention Response	Host Community Parents	Refugee Parents
Reactions to first book	– Did not express any strong reaction; did not give any indication whether the story resonated with them or not.	– Expressed appreciation for the first story; implied that it resonated and made specific reference to the difficulty of initiating friendship.
Inputs for second book	– Elaborated narratives of cross-group friendship; suggested series of positive interactions between Khaled and Eren at school and home. – Expressed concerns about academic success of the protagonists; concern for their psychological well-being also indicated but not emphasized as much. – Asserted a role for parents in facilitating the children's friendships; warmth and hospitality towards child's friend. – Group identities of protagonists acknowledged explicitly by only one parent. –	– Elaborated narratives of cross-group friendship; suggested series of positive interactions between Khaled and Eren at school, home and other sites such as park and museum. – Expressed concerns about psychological wellbeing of the protagonists and appreciated the positive impact of good friendship; concern for academic success also indicated but not emphasized as much. – Asserted a role for parents in facilitating the children's friendships; warmth and hospitality towards child's friend. – Group identities of protagonists not explicitly acknowledged by any parent; indicated interest and hope for more extensive cross-group relations.

Table 6 (continued). *Parents' responses to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

Intervention Response	Host Community Parents	Refugee Parents
Reactions to second book	– Appreciated participatory co-creation of the second book. – Had mixed reactions to the story; with varying levels of acknowledgement and expression of own agency in the state of intergroup relations.	– Engaged deeply with the story and appreciated the relaxed and fun incidents that transpired. – Indicated aspirational as well as inspirational aspects of the story; expressed own agency in terms of both using the book to pass advice to children as well as gleaning advice for self.
General reactions	– Indicated a liking for the books. – Appreciated the bilingual format of the books in Turkish and Arabic. – Appreciated own inclusion in the process; 3 out of 6 parents participated.	– Expressed strong reactions to the books; with divided views on potential of intervention to improve social cohesion. – Appreciated the bilingual format of the books in Turkish and Arabic. – Appreciated own inclusion in the process; 5 out of 9 parents participated.

4.3.3.2 Host community parents' contributions (inputs) towards the second book

Several themes were noticed in the host community parents' inputs for the second book. These are the subject of this subsection. It should be noted that their inputs were overwhelmingly positive, indicating that they could imagine the host community being open and friendly with refugees, including building relationships based on joy and mutual support and their children flourishing together.

Elaborated narratives of cross-group friendship

Parents from the host community extended the narrative of friendship between the host community child and refugee child, which indicates an acceptance of cross-group friendships. Furthermore, they imagined a series of positive interactions between the two friends, both at school and at home. For example:

> *They even sit side by side in class later. They go out for break together and play football together. Eren invites Khaled to his home, they do homework together. (Parent 11H, Female)*

Concerns about academic success

The focus on the two friends doing homework together and academic success was a recurring theme among the inputs received from host community parents, and echoed the principal's account of concerns among host community parents that the inclusion of refugees in their children's classes was affecting their academic success. At the same time, concern about the psychological well-being of the children was also indicated. For example:

> *Eren easily answers the questions at school showing that he is a successful student in the eyes of both the teacher and his friends. Eren one day tells his friends that the monster he saw on the porch was Khaled's cousin Farid in a theater costume. His friends also apologize for making fun of him. (Parent 2H, Female)*

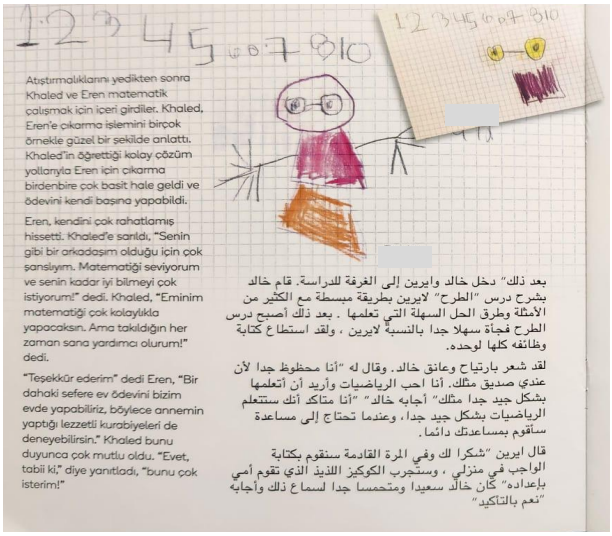


Figure 21. *"He understood mathematics very well"- Excerpt from Book 2*

Parents' role in facilitating friendships

Another recurring theme was the presence of parents as facilitators of the friendship between the children, primarily through hospitality and warm interactions with the visiting child. This was suggested regardless of whether the friends went to the host community child's home or the refugee community child's home. For example:

> *Eren invites Khaled to his home, they do homework together. They were eating cookies made by Eren's mother, Aunt Meryem, and had a lot of fun. (Parent 11H, Female)*

> *Eren thanked Khaled and his mother and he went back home. He told his mother at home about what happened there. He explained how hospitable they were and that he understood mathematics very well. (Parent 7H, Female)*

Acknowledgement of group identities or otherness

When writing about the characters in their story inputs, host community parents did not acknowledge group identities such as Turkish and Syrian, host and refugee, or local and foreigner. Khaled's Syrian heritage was mentioned explicitly by only one parent, who approached it in a positive way as an opportunity for cultural exchange:

> *These chocolates and biscuits were different from what Eren ate. It had Arabic writings on it. It was Syrian chocolate. Eren liked these different things very much. It was very nice to meet a different culture, a different tradition and taste different flavors. Eren said Shukran to Aunt Samsa and smiled mischievously. (Parent 7H, Female)*

4.3.3.3 Host community parents' reactions to the second book

Host community parents were much more effusive about the second book than they were about the first book. One of them, who had sent inputs for the second story, appreciated the participatory nature of the process, while the one who was unable to send inputs focused on the significance of participation for her child.

> *The fact that you put the kids' drawings and the parents' stories to this book, it's a really beautiful and different experience for a writer and it's an amazing idea. And also the flow of the story, the book, is quite good. I liked it so much. (Parent 7H, Female)*

> *Burcu liked it so much. And she showed "This is my picture. Qimti put my picture here." And she was so happy about it. It's a part of themselves. They (the students) loved it more. (Parent 9H, Female)*

As for their takeaway messages from the second story, there were some stark differences among host community parents. For example:

> *This (establishing understanding, trust, peace and friendship) can be our joint goal. (Parent 2H, Female)*

> *The only difference is the language difference, other than that we don't have a lot of differences. Learning cultures is quite important. That way our children can learn culture and language at the same time. For example, we have two Syrian neighbors and they brought us some cookies and we prepared some crepes and we bring (brought) them. It was so different. I don't know if they have the same crepe culture in their culture, but they asked "How did you do that?" and we also asked the way they made the cookies. And it was so tasty, it was different, it was a different taste for us…And this book also shows those aspects. I showed those things into this book…(I)t's important for our kids to learn the culture. We should not exclude anyone. We should try to learn the culture together. (Parent 7H, Female)*

While the first account above indicates a perception of the story as aspirational, the second account elaborates on the aspects of cultural exchange and enrichment that the parent was already experiencing in her interactions with members of the refugee community and wanted children to emulate and learn from. It is important to note these differences within the host community as they can have implications for programs designed to improve social cohesion. In any case, both accounts indicate an acceptance from host community parents of the idea of greater social cohesion.

4.3.3.4 General reactions of host community parents to the intervention

The preceding subsections described the reactions of host community parents to specific stages of the intervention. This subsection considers their more general reaction to the intervention overall. Parents from the host community shared a range of positive feelings about the implementation of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention. They indicated liking the content of the books, their bilingual format and the inclusion of their own inputs in the book. They shared these sentiments as follows:

> *They are developing relationships with Syrian neighbors and the kids are becoming friends and it's beautiful to see. It's really nice. It doesn't matter which language you speak, they can get along actually. (Parent 2H, Female)*
>
> *I really love that concept. I really liked it. The fact that it's also in Turkish and also in Arabic, it's really nice. Because the children wouldn't understand it, when Arabic and Syrian students read it in Turkish, they wouldn't understand, they are just looking at the pictures and closing the book. But they have to have someone in home to understand the Turkish. And we also have a lot of Syrian families in our building. The kids don't learn any Turkish. (Parent 9H, Female)*
>
> *(Qimti is) really a kind writer. And she valued us and it was quite a surprise for us. (Parent 7H, Female)*

Figure 22 below shows the cover and acknowledgements page of the second book in which the children's and parents' contributions towards its creation are recognized.

These are encouraging signs, in particular the fact that they were not disturbed by receiving a book which had Arabic text in it. This had been a cause for concern during the planning phase of the intervention due to a desire to respect sensitivities of the host community as well as parents' perceptions of the school. However, the host community parents not only exhibited an acceptance of the bilingual format of the book but actually liked it and indicated an understanding of Turkish language limitations among refugee families and the need to overcome that in order to be inclusive. It should be noted that these parents had been part of shared communication channels such as the parents' WhatsApp group administered by the teacher since the beginning of the year, and this channel also incorporated Arabic translations of the teacher's messages to the parents, facilitated by one of the refugee parents who knew

Turkish. This familiarity with bilingual communication might be causing the ease and understanding they expressed with regard to the bilingual format of the books.

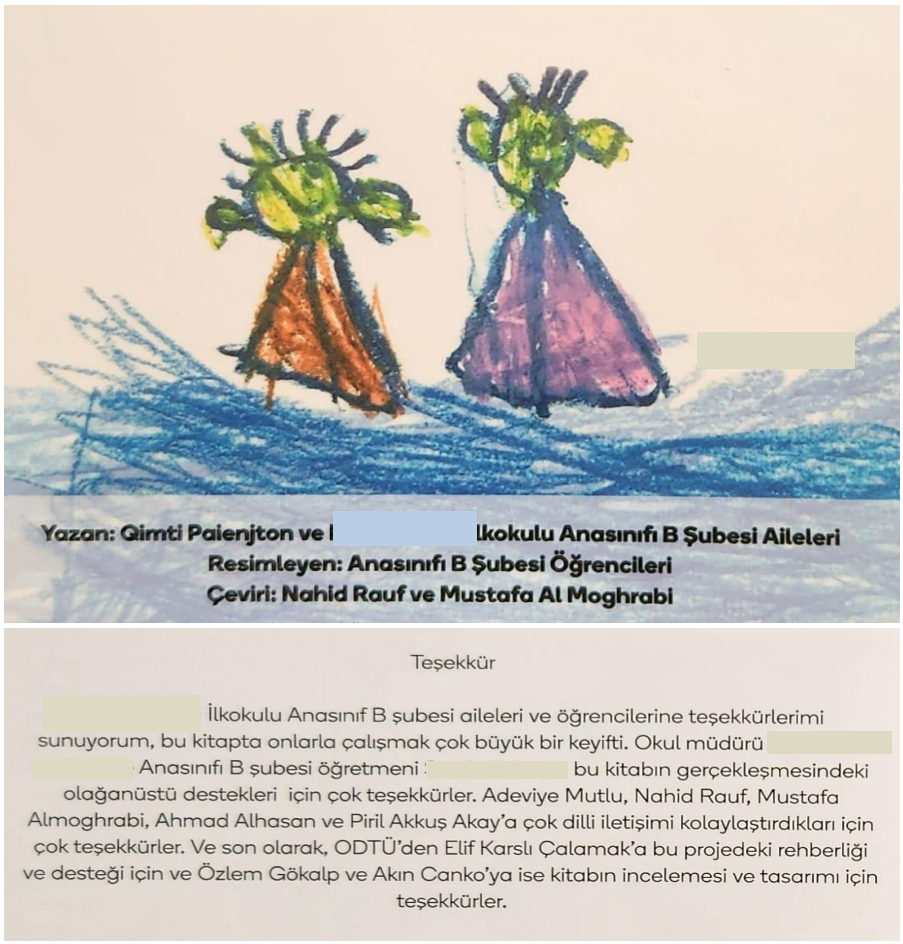


Figure 22. *"She valued us and it was quite a surprise for us!"- Parent 7H*

4.3.4 How parents from the refugee community responded to the intervention

Out of the nine refugee parents who agreed to participate in the study, five of them sent inputs for the second story. Four of these further participated in the study by coming for interviews with the researcher at the school - all mothers - as did two other parents - one mother and one father - who were not able to send inputs due to pregnancy or childcare, while it was not possible to schedule an interview with the

fifth refugee parent who sent inputs[7]. This subsection is based on the analysis of their story inputs and interview transcripts.

4.3.4.1 Refugee parents' reactions to the first book

Several refugee parents spoke specifically about the first book in their interviews. They took note of the host community child being upset and the refugee child helping him, with one parent even generalizing from that. In their own words:

> *When Eren was afraid because he saw a monster, everyone was laughing because they didn't (believe him). After that Khaled came to him and said "No, I can believe you." Something like this. (Parent 3R, Female)*

> *I liked the story too much. Like when Eren he didn't have friends, his friends were not looking at him, after that he found Khaled who solved his problem and helped him. As there are bad ones, there are good people as well. (Parent 1R, Female)*

One refugee parent made a striking observation about the first book:

> *The first book is the hardest step which no one can step it… Some people doesn't accept to start a meeting with someone. Some people you can't like feel safe to send your children. So the first book/step is the hardest one. (Parent 6R, Female)*

Referring to the initiation of the friendship between Khaled and Eren, she not only emphasizes that the initiation of friendship across communities is the hardest step, but she also alludes to the underlying reason being a concern for their child's safety. This is an important consideration for implementing interventions to enhance social cohesion and underscores the opportunity provided by a diverse preschool to initiate cross-community friendships in a safe space.

Figure 23 below is an excerpt from the first book at the point in the story that the Syrian protagonist Khaled walks towards the Turkish protagonist Eren to comfort him as he is visibly upset which results in the initiation of their friendship.

[7] It should be noted that out of the two refugee parents who neither sent inputs for the second story nor came in for interviews, both of them was indicated as never participating in school activities by the teacher.

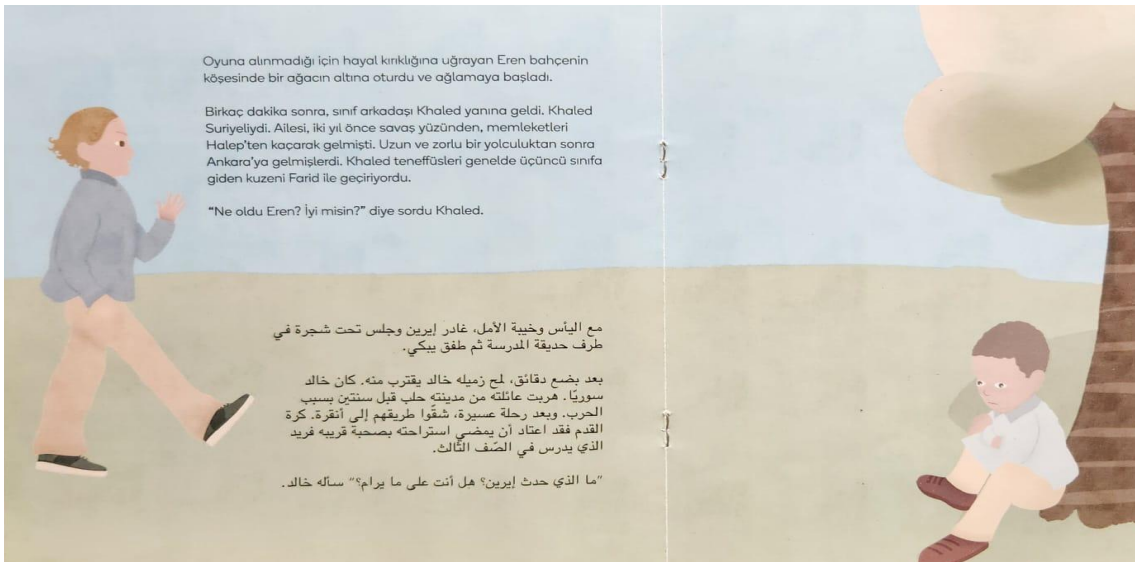


Figure 23. *"The first book is the hardest step" – Parent 6R*

4.3.4.2 Refugee parents' contributions (inputs) towards the second book

As with host community parents, several themes emerged within the inputs that refugee parents sent for the second book. These are the subject of this subsection. Overall, their inputs were also overwhelmingly positive, indicating that they could imagine the refugee community being friendly with the host community. Furthermore, they seemed to harbour a desire not only for children to be at ease and integrated with host community children but also for this to catalyze the integration of parents, within and beyond school.

Elaborated narratives of cross-group friendship

In their inputs for the second book, refugee parents, like host community parents, extended the narrative of friendship between Khaled and Eren. They took it even further than the school and the home, to the park and other cultural and recreation sites. For example:

> *They became friends at school and outside of school. They used to meet in the park and play soccer together. (Parent 3R, Male)*

Me and my friend Khaled enjoyed the holidays. We went to Ataturk Museum and Ankara Castle. It was a nice holiday professor." The professor said "So you will start this year with optimism. (Parent 3R, Male)

Concerns about psychosocial wellbeing

They did not extend the academic theme of the narrative beyond doing homework together, but they wrote extensively about the psychosocial aspects of friendship and the positive impact of good friendships, characterized by kindness, affection and reciprocity. For example:

His friends used to treat him badly and the professor interfered in this matter for Eren's psychological health. (Parent 1R, Female)

The two friends Eren and Khaled finished their day and went back home smiling… Friendship is an irreplaceable treasure that you cannot buy with any price. (Parent 3R, Male)

Then she takes him to Eren's room and they do the homework together. Then they play with Eren's toys, and they agree that Eren will visit Khaled next time to get to know his family as well. And Eren will take his sister to play with Khaled's sister. (Parent 12R, Female)

After they finished, Eren thanked Khaled and hugged him and said to him: You are the best friend, thank you very much. We will meet tomorrow at school. (Parent 6R, Female)

Parents' role in facilitating friendships

Similar to host community parents, refugee parents also indicated a role for the parent in the children's friendship which was characterized by warmth and hospitality. For example:

Khaled's mother entered with two glasses of juice and some biscuits in her hand, she wished the children success and left. (Parent 6R, Female))

Khaled's mother opens (the door for Eren) and welcomes him, and asks him where he lives and asks him about his family. (Parent 12R, Female)

Acknowledgement of group identities or otherness dynamics

The last example above also hints at another recurring theme. Unlike the narratives received from host community parents, the narratives received from refugee parents seemed to harbor interest and hope for more extensive cross-group relations, although they too did not explicitly mention group identities in the inputs they sent. Another example of this is as follows:

> *What is happening between Eren and Khaled is building trust between them and encouraging the rest of the children to interact with each other. (Parent 5R, Female)*

4.3.4.3 Refugee parents' reactions to the second book

Refugee parents also shared specific reactions to the second book. They noted that the second book was more interesting because it had more incidents and these incidents were desirable:

> *We liked the second story more than the first story. It was a nice surprise for us and for the children. It was more interesting. It has more incidents. We liked the incidents more and we want these things to be real. To happen in our real lives. (Parent 5R, Female)*

Referring above to the children visiting each other's homes, visiting the seaside together and making plans to do other excursions together, the refugee parents indicate that they hoped to have these kinds of "comfortable, more relaxed" social interactions with the host community. Like host community parents, some refugee parents mentioned the aspirational aspects of the second book. They noted it reflected their own aspirations, especially for their children, and it inspired them to act in certain ways, e.g. "I will make Syrian biscuits to share", in social encounters with the host community.

> *I liked it because I wrote it (laughs). This sentence is like a motivation for what's inside the book. Our children, they stay in Türkiye, I want it to be inside them. To get used to it when they are older. (Parent 5R, Female)*

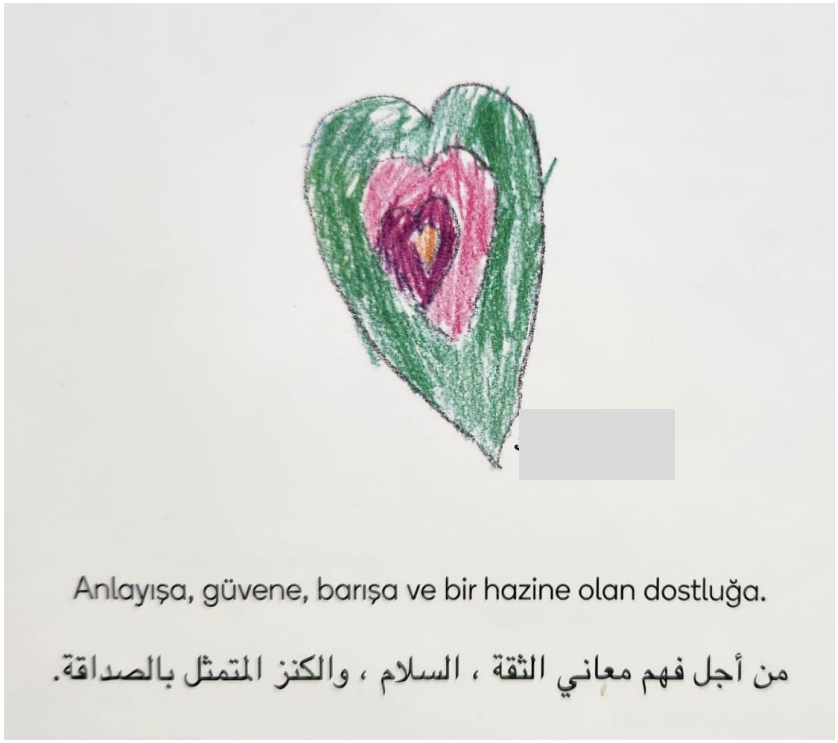


Figure 24. *"I wrote it… I want it to be inside them." – Parent5R*

> *It's good for the future of the children as well. We will have something like a trip after some days. I will do some Syrian biscuits and take it with me. (Parent 1R, Female)*

Finally one refugee parent made the following interesting observation:

> *About the costumes. When the sister dressed up as a monster. In the first story, he (Eren) felt too afraid of them (monster costume worn by the character Farid for theater practice when he was spotted at the window by Eren). But after that, he understand and he got used to them and he didn't get afraid (when the characters Amira and Damla dressed up as monster and zombie during play). It was a nice idea. (Parent 1R, Female)*

Although this was not an intended connection worked into the book, it suggests that this refugee parent was not only quite sensitive to children's emotional states and the underlying reasons for these, e.g. fear driven by a lack of understanding, but also that she had engaged deeply with both books. This is an encouraging sign about the potential of the intervention to reach parents, as well as a further illustration of the added value their engagement in the process can bring.

4.3.4.4 Overall reactions of refugee parents

The preceding subsections described the reactions of refugee parents to specific stages of the intervention. This subsection considers their more general reaction to the intervention overall. Some refugee parents were quite effusive about the potential of the intervention to improve social cohesion between the host community and refugee community. For example:

> *It would be better to remove the racism against Syrian and Turkish. It would be a hard thing, but we should start from now. To fill their minds with these ideas. Since they are children. We can write books like this. (Parent 6R, Female)*

> *It's like two states in one country, here like Syrians and Turkish. You took both ideas from two sides. It's a great effort! (Parent1R, Female)*

Other refugee parents were not so convinced:

> *You can't break this wall. It's up to me. If I take Isra and put her in another community, all of them Turkish, it will happen… I can find it, but it will be too expensive. Yes, this is the only solve (solution)... If they didn't have this racist attitude toward Syrians, it can help them. But if they are originally racist, it wouldn't help. (Parent 8R, Male)*

It is interesting to note that the refugee father who was interviewed was less optimistic than the refugee mothers. He considered it his own responsibility to take actions to improve his daughter's language skills (through more immersive experiences) rather than expecting this school to implement any additional interventions. With regard to the bilingual format of the books, the refugee parents were appreciative. They indicated that they and their children would not have understood the stories without that. In her own words:

> *Perfect, because some people can't understand Turkish. I can't understand much Turkish. It's perfect, because in case you didn't read in Arabic, (they/we) would not understand it. (Parent 4R, Female)*

Finally, like host community parents, they expressed sincere appreciation for the implementation of the intervention and their engagement in it. For example:

> *I want to thank you because I appreciate your efforts. Because you wrote the story, you called the parents and asked about their opinions, about their feedbacks, so I appreciate your work and effort…Even if you write another*

story, I can help you as well…Thank you for your efforts, for respect. (Parent 1R, Female)

4.3.5 How the teacher responded to the intervention

This sub-section details the findings on the responses of the teacher to the participatory adapted bibliotherapy intervention. However, first Table 7 below summarizes the findings on this topic for the educators overall.

The teacher was instrumental in the implementation of the intervention and was very interested in the study and intervention. Although she expressed concerns from the very beginning about her students' attention spans being inadequate for reading and writing activities, she was willing to try the adapted bibliotherapy intervention in her class and she supported the researcher throughout the process. Her main responses to the intervention are laid out below.

Representation of children and acknowledgement of their agency

According to the teacher, the main benefit of the intervention was that it acknowledged children and their social context in a relevant way, especially for the refugee children. In her own words:

> *I really think that children like to be seen. Actually they like to be the center of attention. And they don't have this opportunity in their own country. And when they go to another country, the fact that there is kind of works might be quite beneficial. And when they grow up, they see that they were taken care of.*

> *I believe it will be beneficial in terms of Turkish and Arab communication. But I don't know how big of an effect it will have. It's about their own point of view, it's not quite clear. But I believe that during the journey they will have in this country, this will be a positive milestone. And they would say that I existed during the beginning of my journey in a story. Actually they created the second book's characters together, and they created the characters' paths together, so in their journey in our country, there would be a positive step.*

It is worth noting that the teacher appreciates not just the representation of children in the stories but also their agency in creating the second story.

Table 7. *Educators' responses to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

Intervention Response	Teacher	School Principal
Representation of children and acknowledgement of their agency in co-creation of second book	– Expressed strong appreciation for representation of children in the books; perceived long-term benefits, especially for refugee children. – Acknowledged children's agency in co-creating the second book; indicated appreciation for potential of intervention to empower children.	– Expressed great enthusiasm for engagement of children in the co-creation of the second book; perceived benefits for enhancing children's creativity as well as their understanding.
Crystallization of role of host community parents in promoting social cohesion	– Emphasized the role of host community parents in navigating diversity and enhancing social cohesion; perceived immediate benefits for parents in learning to fulfil this role.	– Did not comment on this aspect.
Parent engagement in intervention	– Observed inadequacies in parent engagement with the intervention.	– Indicated interest in learning about parents' perspectives on the intervention.
Ownership of intervention and identification of new strategies and roles for self	– Indicated that the intervention gave her new ideas and renewed confidence to navigate her role in a diverse classroom. – Recommended that the intervention be implemented as a regular preschool activity under the pretext of value education.	– Expressed strong ownership of process and book; perceived benefits for both self and school. – Recommended the intervention be shared with MoNE so that they can consider adding it to the curriculum; indicated own intention of doing so. – Reconsidered own role in facilitating Turkish language acquisition for refugee families.

The teacher thus indicates her belief that the latter will have a positive and empowering effect for them, especially in the longer term.

Crystallization of role of host community parents

She also indicated that host community parents stood to benefit from the intervention. In her words:

> *In addition, I previously talked about in the point of view of Arab kids and parents, but it's also quite important for Turkish kids and Turkish parents, especially the second book has some elements about that. For example, Eren's father's behaviors are quite important. And this actually shows the Turkish parents, instead of Turkish children, today's adults, how to act, how to adapt/adopt this kind of role. So this will also be positively beneficial for the Turkish parents.*

This is interesting because she builds on her previous narrative. That while parents in the school community did not generally harbor negative attitudes towards each other, the intervention exposed them to specific ways in which they could navigate their roles in the social context of diversity, particularly parents from the host community. According to one of the host community parents, the teacher had been encouraging them to teach Turkish to refugees in their building, even prior to the intervention, so this aspect of the stories resonated strongly with her as well.

Parent engagement in the intervention

The teacher indicated being underwhelmed by the parents' engagement with the intervention. She thought they had not been as proactive as they could have been, especially with reading and discussing the stories with the children at home:

> *When it comes to the parents, especially the second book part of the project was the most joyous one, and they loved it so much, but I think that they didn't really show the enough value to the project, and they couldn't understand the real value of the project actually, because in their normal day to day life they usually go pass by each other with Turkish people, they don't get too close. And if we look at how much of a difference that this book made, this is not that clear. I think, in fact I don't think that they played enough role when it comes to the role at home. They didn't read enough and they didn't talk about the books enough at home and this could have been better. Did we reach the goal completely? And as they are adult people, this is something that can be determined by them.*

Identification of new strategies for self

The teacher indicated that she considered herself to be the foremost beneficiary of the intervention. She elaborated as follows:

> *We have a lot of different nations and this is a unique school in terms of that…(N)ow I have a lot of ideas, and I can take on steady steps. And I know what the kids want, how can I help them, how can I help them communicate, what they would prefer. I learned a lot of things. Thank you so much. You being here was an important opportunity for me.*

She confessed that previously she felt ill-equipped to navigate her role as a teacher in such a diverse classroom but being a part of this study and implementation has boosted her ideas and confidence to do so. She opined that the intervention could be replicated by preschool teachers in public schools and she recommended that it should be a regular preschool activity implemented under the pretext of value education. She elaborated as follows:

> *For example, first month we started with 'love' and then 'respect', 'empathy' and 'friendship' and each month you have to do at least one activity about them. If we have something like this, like a series, some books that are correlated and coordinated, a series of books, this would be the most logical. Because this way kids would connect to the books more easily and the story continues. This would be more beneficial. It shouldn't be with only one story and it shouldn't be one time. This should be like a routine and that's how we can do it.*

4.3.6. How the school principal responded to the intervention

The school principal was supportive and collaborative from the very beginning of the study. In fact, his openness to the initiative from the very first moment of contact with the research team was a significant factor in the selection of his school for the study. He supported the study at every stage and entrusted the researcher to make all the decisions with regard to how the intervention was implemented, including the class and section in which it was implemented. He only requested to be kept informed regarding any planned interactions with the parents. Whenever he was informed about these plans, he reviewed and responded promptly. He made himself available to be interviewed by the researcher before and after the implementation of the intervention,

and he also facilitated the researcher's integration into the school community. His main responses to the intervention are laid out below.

Enthusiasm about co-creation and children's creativity

He responded very positively to the second book when it was shared with him in advance of being shared with the parents, and expressed his appreciation during the endline interview.

> *The children's drawings are quite important. And the fact that it has two languages. It shows that it's not a book that can be read by children but by parents. And they can read and tell the kids. And the drawings can increase their level of creativity, their imagination. And I really like this. Usually when adults create children's books they put their own drawings, so maybe the child's mind wouldn't associate with our drawings enough. So in this book they have their own drawings, and for example when another child sees it, they can give more meaning to child's drawing than an adult's drawing.*
>
> *The fact that this story was created by the children is a really valuable thing. And I know that you filtered (edited) all the things that is in that, it's also a great value. I am quite happy to be a part of this.*

Ownership of the intervention and perceived benefits for the school

Aside from his appreciation of the agency and creativity of the children in the creation of the book, it is also worth noting his ownership of the book in the above statement. He indicated a similar ownership about the entire process of the implementation, emphasizing it as the most valuable part of the intervention, and noting that it generated benefits for everyone engaged in the process. He elaborated on the benefits he perceived as follows:

> *The biggest beneficiary here was the students and their social cohesion was facilitated a lot. And the second one was the fact that parents are not prejudiced towards each other anymore. And those two things have beneficial effects on our school, and school principals, this actually takes a lot of weight from our shoulders, and it makes the teaching and learning process much more easier. Of course it's not something that we can measure with numbers but that is the case.*

Identification of new roles for self

The principal indicated a belief that offering of new perspectives to the two communities was valuable in its own right and he admitted that it had offered him a new perspective as well. He listened attentively to the researcher's findings about the refugee parents' interest in the Turkish language, especially for their children, which were contrary to his expectations, and he vowed to engage the local Public Education Center to provide support to families at the school itself for improving their Turkish language skills. He also shared his intentions to take further action:

> *We are not the ones who create the laws (policies) but we apply them. However, just to better our system, we can make some suggestions and we have that right. As a result of all this work, I will create a report and I will send it to the Ministry of National Education. And I will talk about these details, all the books, all the things that we did, and the result. And also I will add the things that we talked today. And I will talk with parents and teachers also. And I will give it to the Ministry of National Education. But if you also want to show the things that you've done as a University, they would evaluate all the things that you will send, and it would be beneficial to add those things to the curriculum. We can say: yes, there are some basic level activities, but we applied that, and it results in good things. We can say those things. And that will encourage other institutions.*

As such, the school principal not only reaffirmed his own support for the intervention at the end of the study but also indicated a strong interest in the perspectives of teachers as well as parents. If the perspectives of parents from both host community and refugee community are solicited and taken into account by the principal, this will already signal a more equitable and stronger school community. Furthermore, the principal's eagerness to share his findings with the Ministry of National Education, given his experience and status, is also an encouraging sign in terms of the perceived replicability and scalability of the intervention.

4.4. Important practical considerations for the implementation of the intervention

The findings in preceding sections indicate that that the adapted bibliotherapy intervention was generally well-received by study participants. However, as an action

research, participants were also invited to reflect on the practical considerations for implementing the intervention more effectively and on a larger scale in the future. The analysis of these reflections are presented in this subsection. These are different from the implications of the study which are explicated later in Section 6.3.

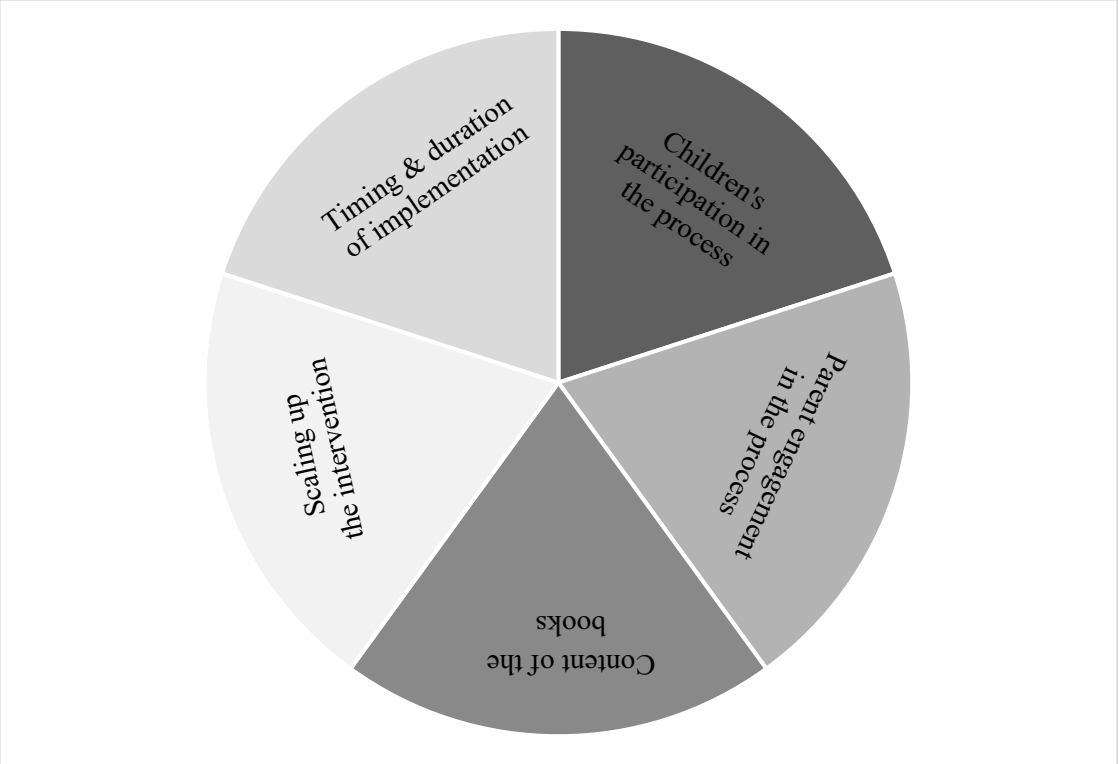


Figure 25. *Practicalities of implementing the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

4.4.1. Timing and duration of the intervention

Considering the importance of 'the beginning' for the formation of children's patterns of social interactions, the timing of the intervention in the final two months of the school year might have limited its potential impact. It could not empower children from the outset to 'see' and appreciate their peers from the other community, as well as to 'see' themselves and their own capacities to navigate social interactions in a diverse classroom. The teacher also said:

> *In my opinion, the second book idea was really good because this thing was created by the kids themselves. And this idea, the book idea was really good because the second book created the milestone of the project actually. But I*

would prefer this to be done in the first semester rather than the second semester, because children's focus might be a little more loose during the second semester. We would get more benefit if we do that in the first semester.

The duration of the intervention was too short and did not give children and their families more time to reflect, contribute and practice the attitudes and behaviors they envisaged for the characters. As the teacher said:

I think that for this to become a reality, in a really good way, we have to have some series and they have to be read regularly. For example, in the curriculum we have a thing called "value education" and each month we have another value. For example, first month we started with 'love' and then 'respect', 'empathy' and 'friendship' and each month you have to do at least one activity about them. If we have something like this, like a series, some books that are correlated and coordinated, a series of books, this would be the most logical. Because this way kids would connect to the books more easily and the story continues. This would be more beneficial. It shouldn't be with only one story and it shouldn't be one time. This should be like a routine.

4.4.2 Children's participation in the process

While the children loved seeing their drawings in the second book, they were also distracted by the surprise and joy of seeing these and could not really focus on the content of the story. While additional time and a sustained implementation approach would help address this a little bit, there might also be some other aspects that could be adjusted. As the teacher said:

As you know in the second book, previously we had two characters, but now we have four characters. It was not hard for them to understand the first book. But when it comes to the second book, we talked about it, we read, we translated it, and we got lower benefits because their focus was distracted so much. This is not about the second semester being more relaxed or anything, this is not just the reason. Generally, when it comes to academic work, their focus is not that good. And when it comes to the four characters in the story, they couldn't quite understand who is whose brother etc. In that age actually children would have hardship the relative relations. We don't have some aunts and uncles here, but sisters and brothers are also hard for them.

The distractedness of the children and rapid implementation of the intervention did not allow for mindful participation of children in the process. They may have derived more

participatory benefits if the intervention had been implemented in a slower and more modular form.

4.4.3 Parents engagement in the process

According to the teacher, the parents' participation in the adapted bibliotherapy process could have been better:

> *At home, I don't think that the parents took the book quite seriously and did a really well work most of the time. The people (children) that we have in our hands were the people (children) who were so hungry for their moms and dads to read them some books, and they would understand even they would listen for one time, they were the smart ones, e.g. Ilay and Safa. But the other ones were a little bit shaky. Maybe they read that at home for one time, or maybe they told us that they did but they didn't. So this created some sort of a chaos.*

Several parents indicated that they did not have time to read the books. Several others were not able to send inputs for the second book nor come to the school for interviews. While others did all of these things and even wrote additional notes to the researcher. This indicates various levels of capital possessed or mobilized by the parents in the course of the intervention.

It is important to take note of these factors and engage parents in the planning stage of the intervention to empower them to participate in the ways that they are able to.

4.4.4. Content of the books

The findings showed that children did not necessarily identify with the characters in the ways that were expected. Their own personal traits, self-perceptions and experiences were more important factors for identification than their group identity. This should be factored into the creation of the characters for the books in order to be more effective.

Furthermore, while the bilingual format of the book was well-received and appreciated by the participants, written/formal Arabic proved to be a challenge for refugee families

and they had to translate into spoken/informal Arabic. One parent shared her experience as follows:

> *We read it in formal Arabic but we explained for them in our spoken language. They didn't understand. They asked "how? what do you mean this?" We explained it then in the spoken language. For me it would be a hard thing. Because children will not be able to learn the formal Arabic. (Parent 1R, Female)*

Another challenge was the volume of content in each book. Necessitated by the short duration of the study, this posed challenges for children of preschool age. They could not attend do all aspects of the stories and most of them could not remember even basic details at endline.

4.4.5 Scaling up the intervention

As preschool attendance rates increase in the country which is expected due to the planned removal of kindergarten fee in public schools, more preschool-aged children from both host community and refugee communities will be encountering each other in the school context. Many more children and families therefore stand to benefit from the intervention. The principal had important insights on how to advocate for the scaling up of the intervention:

> *You did that in one class actually. You closed the gap between students and families, and you created relationships. But if we do this work in a national area or global area, people would easily get used to each other. The only problem in front of this is no one does anything about it. This work has been beneficial actually. We saw the benefits. And we believe in those benefits. But in the bigger scale, we have to have people who believe in that. It's not…and officially just saying that we did this and it's good and you also should do this…it's not enough. Because majority of people would not apply that. For example, if we have some voluntary people in each school, and each school has done its part, it would be beneficial.*

He suggested that each school receive the support of a volunteer to consider and implement the intervention. He also indicated that he would inform the Ministry of National Education about his school's experience with the intervention.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1. How host community children and refugee children navigate social interactions with each other in the public preschool context

This study found that cross-group friendships and play interactions between host community children and refugee children attending a common public school with half the children from the host community and half the children from the refugee community were limited. The main reason for the limitation was the language difference between children from the two communities, with refugee children unable to converse in Turkish and preferring to befriend and play with other Arabic-speaking refugee children, many of whom were their neighbors and playmates outside of school as well. Host community children expressed frustration at not being understood by their refugee peers nor being able to understand them. In cases that cross-group friendships had flourished, factors that facilitated these included parent attitudes and behaviors to cross-group relations (own parent or peer's parent), children's developmental levels and children's shared preferences for non-verbal play activities. The parents' attitudes to cross-group relations were further influenced by social experiences of their own and of their older children.

A study of Syrian refugee children attending public schools in Lebanon found that children in mixed shift classes, whereby refugee children and host community children were studying in the same school at the same time, had more positive cross-group perceptions and relationships than children in double shift classes, whereby refugee children and host community children were studying in the same school at different times of the day (Abla & Al-Masri, 2015). Although the present study did not find strong cross- group relationships between host community and refugee children,

there is not necessarily a contradiction because refugee children and host community children attending mixed shift classes in Lebanon both speak Arabic and do not have a language difference impeding play interactions. Furthermore, there was no evidence in the present study that the children's perceptions of outgroup peers were not positive. It was just much easier for them to play with other refugee children who speak Arabic, especially since the nature of play and friendship they seem to enjoy involves significant verbal exchanges. Related to this, Aboud (2003) found that ingroup favoritism begins to emerge at 5 years of age and then reaches significant levels whereas outgroup prejudice is weaker but outgroup peers still suffer due to strong favoritism towards ingroup peers. It should also be noted that the language difference was what made the ingroup and outgroup identities salient for children in the present study. Other than that, no other forms of group-based differentiation were found. In fact, children expressed a desire to connect more deeply with each other and were frustrated by not being able to understand each other.

Language, specifically the Turkish proficiency of refugee children, was also found to be one of the main determinants of peer relationships and peer culture in a study conducted in a similarly diverse preschool in Kahramanmaras province of Türkiye (Yanik Özger & Akansel, 2019). This study found that refugee children who could not converse in Turkish were less likely to interact with host community peers than those who could. Even rudimentary Turkish skills were found to increase the frequency of cross-group interactions, and these interactions in turn were observed to contribute to development of refugee children's Turkish skills. Interestingly, the authors report that conflicts with host community peers forced refugee children to learn Turkish so that they could complain to the teacher and defend their rights.

The general tendency of refugee children in this study was to avoid direct cross-group friendships and play, whereas host community children were much more likely to seek or initiate such contact and acknowledge it. Even though refugee children were encouraged by their parents to cultivate cross-group friendships or play partners, a pressure not experienced by their host community peers, the idea induced great anxiety in them due to their low Turkish language proficiency as already discussed. However,

extended contact a la Wright et al. (1997), defined as the knowledge that an ingroup member has a close relationship with an outgroup member, appeared acceptable among refugee children, and the same norm of acceptance seemed to prevail among host community children as well. Cameron et al. (2006) found that extended contact can actually lead to more positive attitudes towards outgroup members among 5- to 11-year-old children. This is encouraging for the prospect of nurturing greater social cohesion because it suggests that children who do not yet engage in interactions with children from the other community might already harbor positive attitudes towards them. Akgün et al. (2018) found that four- to-five-year-olds tended to embrace more positive attitudes than six- to seven-year-olds, pointing to the window of opportunity offered by diverse preschools to reinforce such attitudes, and attributed children's negative attitudes to adults around them.

The present study, however, found that parents, especially some host community parents, were already trying to foster positive attitudes towards cross-group interactions among the children. They did so by invoking the common ingroup identity a la Gaertner et al. (1989) when they told them 'you are all in the same class, you have to play together' or by modelling friendly behaviors towards outgroup children despite the language difference. This was in contrast to another finding by Yanik Özger & Akansel (2019) that host community parents harbored negative sentiments towards refugees and their children's attitudes and behavior shifted to the negative side over the course of the school year. The ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner offers both an explanation and hope with regard to these contradictory findings. It is possible that host community parents in 2022, over ten years into the Syrian conflict and the resulting displacement of Syrians to Türkiye in subsequent years, have accepted that Syrian families are here to stay and are adjusting to this new macrosystem by encouraging their children to develop the skills and attitude to navigate diversity in their environments. The hope is that just as negative attitudes of parents were found to worsen preschool children's cross-group interactions, the positive attitudes of parents in this study would lead to improvements in children's cross-group interactions over time.

Children from both refugee and host communities in this study were found to approach many of their social interactions through a lens of personalization a la Brewer and Miller (1984), i.e. without attending to group identities. For example, appreciation of shared temperaments and pursuit of shared interests brought the children together in play, even across group boundaries, although the latter was usually only in the form of parallel play due to the language difference. When such play episodes did happen, they were enjoyed by children from both groups. This personalized or non-categorical attitudes and behaviors of preschool children, whereby they seem to pursue friendships and play partnerships based primarily on communicability and shared interests or aptitudes, presents a huge opportunity for enhancing inter-group contact within the public preschool context. If institutional support could be provided on boosting refugee children's Turkish skills, both refugee children and host community children would benefit from more direct interaction.

At a more macro level, the findings of this study are consistent with the evidence-based assertion made by Dryden-Peterson et al. (2018) that structural integration of refugees into public education systems, whereby they are provided access to schools using the national curriculum, taught by host community teachers alongside host community children and have access to national examination and certification, does not automatically lead to relational integration in the form of belonging, connectedness and social cohesion. They further lament that the relational aspects of inclusion are mostly overlooked in refugee education policies and programs, which could mean that the intervention implemented in this study, if scaled up, might place Türkiye among pioneer countries for refugee education in this regard as well.

5.2. How host community parents and refugee parents navigate social interactions with each other in the public preschool context

This study found that host community parents and refugee parents have limited interaction with each other, as well as among their respective ingroups. The lack of opportunities to meet was probably the foremost contributing factor, and this was compounded by several other factors. A post-displacement, post-pandemic context of

increased social isolation, along with an inflationary economic context, was not conducive to prioritizing social lives. Additionally, for refugee parents, experiences of perceived racism, both inside and outside school, were demotivating for seeking cross-group interaction. Finally, as with children, language differences were a challenge for communication and interaction, and the lack of interaction perpetuated a scenario of only very basic Turkish skills for refugee parents.

Parents from both refugee community and host community were not experiencing any direct contact with each other within the preschool context. This finding is consistent with many other studies documenting the lack of interaction among local and refugee families. Direct contact with other parents from their own communities was also minimal, especially for refugee parents since they did not come to the school to drop or pick their children. This not only prevented them for interacting with other parents, but also from interacting with other children and for modelling inter-group contact for their own children in the preschool context. According to Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) presence in the school allows for the activation of interactive capital which parents can use to influence what transpires at school. Host community parents had some of these opportunities and they used them to nurturing positive attitudes and behaviors towards refugee children. Some examples are provided in the following sections.

The possibility of direct contact with each other via social media was available to all parents due to the Parents' WhatsApp group created by the teacher. However, they did not avail this opportunity and the teacher was the only one writing in the group while parents were writing to her individually. The WhatsApp Group therefore served as a form of extended contact a la Wright et al. (1997) at best, with all parents aware that the teacher was interacting with both groups. Perhaps it also served to create a common ingroup identity, at least on social media, as 'the parents of the kindergarten class ' and influenced their attitudes regarding the intergroup relations of their children. Such use of instant messaging tool (i.e. WhatsApp) is also documented in the literature as having potential to increase interactions among teachers and refugee families (Allexsaht-Snider et al., 2020), to provide opportunities for sustaining ongoing conversations when face-to-face meetings are not possible for refugees (Dahya et al.,

2019), and facilitating access to information that would otherwise be inaccessible due to social walls (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017).

Common ingroup identity, as per Gaertner & Dovidio's (1989) model of intergroup contact, was a common theme that parents from both communities invoked when discussing intergroup interactions of their children, reportedly encouraging them to play with outgroup peers because they were 'all in the same class'. While refugee parents consistently expressed a desire for their children to play with children from the host community so that they could learn Turkish, host community parents expressed a desire that refugee children would learn Turkish so that the children from the two communities could be friends and play together. This finding of refugee parents' desire for their children to learn Turkish was also found in other studies conducted with refugee families in Türkiye (Erdemir, 2022; Karsli-Calamak et al., 2022). However, there was some heterogeneity among the host community parents on the issue of language, whereby some host community parents did not consider language to be barrier for communication, at least for themselves to communicate with refugee children. Such host community parents were noted as positive exemplars by refugee parents, and as suggested by the extended contact hypothesis of Wright et al. (1997), might have played a role in fostering positive intergroup attitudes on the part of these refugee parents. The potential of encounters with outgroup members in safe educational settings to transform negative outgroup attitudes to positive ones have also been documented in the literature (Hammack, 2011; Maoz, 2004; Abu-Nimer, 1999).

With regard to parents' attitudes on intergroup contact among themselves, while a lack of opportunities to meet regularly were reported by parents from both communities, some refugee parents also confessed their own reluctance to engage in intergroup contact because they are shy due to their emergent language skills or because of the prejudice they had experienced from the host community members outside of the school context. Refugee families' feelings of inadequacy with respect to language were also found in a study conducted by Cureton (2020), and the Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2019) points out that refugee families often live in a context of biased media coverage and negative public attitudes towards them. Language and media coverage are both important aspects of a person's macrosystem,

and per Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, can have a strong influence in shaping their attitudes and behaviors, which in this case can translate into a fear of rejection from the host community. The fear of minority communities that they will be rejected by majority communities has been documented elsewhere (Shelton & Richeson, 2005) and it is one of the main contributing factors for the phenomenon of intergroup anxiety, along with a fear on the part of being perceived as prejudiced by the other community (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). In such contexts, interventions focusing on extended contact and imagined contact can be useful to overcome intergroup anxiety prior to direct contact (Crisp & Turner, 2009) and therefore makes our adapted bibliotherapy intervention, which includes components of both extended contact and imagined contact, a well-suited one for the parents in this study.

5.3. How children responded to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention

The adapted bibliotherapy intervention, specifically the process of reading the stories of Khaled and Eren with their teacher and parents, was expected to promote cross-group friendships among the refugee children and host community children in the class. However, children's friendship patterns did not appear to change over the course of this study, with ingroup friendships remaining dominant for both groups. Furthermore, it emerged that children had not strongly attended to the group identities of the protagonists in the stories. While they enjoyed receiving the books and taking them home, as well as the gamified and drawing activities that led to the co-creation of the second book, most of them, particularly refugee children, appeared to have trouble focusing during the storytelling in class, even though consecutive Arabic translation was used. Very few children, including from the host community, could recall any specific aspects of the stories at endline. The most appreciated aspect of the intervention for the children was seeing their own and their friend's illustrations in the second book, which led to feelings of representation, achievement and agency for many children.

There are several possible reasons why the implemented intervention did not lead to more cross-group friendships in the class. The conditions under which the intervention

was implemented did not meet several of the principles for effective early childhood programs prescribed by Reynolds (1998) such as extended implementation across multiple years, low teacher-child ratios (ideally 1 to 8 or lower), comprehensive services (e.g. language support for refugee families) or teacher training (e.g. on multicultural education). However, the design and implementation of the intervention itself merits further discussion in the interpretation of this result as well, for which the Process, Person, Context, Time (PPCT) model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) provides a useful framework. As the accompanying empirical framework for the bioecological theory of human development, the PPCT model predicts that the outcome of any proximal process, in this case an increased tendency towards cross-group friendship following the reading of the stories about cross-group friendship, is influenced by factors related to the person, the context and time.

Among person characteristics, perhaps most relevant to this intervention is the difficulty experienced by preschool children, as explained by Aboud (2003), to attend to multiple dominating features at the same time. The children in this study attended primarily to the height difference in the illustrations of Khaled and Eren, interpreted as an age difference by some children, rather than their Syrian and Turkish identities. As such, the group identities of the protagonists were not salient for the children, and therefore the notion of extended contact with outgroup members, as well as its anticipated benefit of more positive outgroup attitudes, did not materialize for the children in this study as it did for children in other studies (Cameron et al., 2006).

With regard to the context aspect of the PPCT model, the context for which the intervention was designed, i.e. a shared space assimilation model of inclusion of Syrian refugees into Turkish public school, was not encountered in the preschool where the intervention was implemented. An assimilation model would presume that the refugee children in the school are speaking Turkish language and would be able to engage in greater interaction with host community children if they decided to. However, this was not found to be the case. Even at the end of the school year, the refugee children in the studied preschool class had minimal Turkish language skills, were mostly speaking in Arabic while at school and were mostly interacting with other Arabic-speaking peers.

How this presents a strong barrier for cross-group friendships and play interactions has already been discussed. It should further be noted that this preschool is not unique in terms of refugee children having difficulties learning Turkish, with Yanik Özger & Akansel (2019) indicating a similar situation in the preschool classroom they studied in Kahramanmaras and Cummins (2012) reporting that educational systems across the world struggle to meet the linguistic needs of emergent bilingual children.

Finally, with regard to the time aspect of the PPCT model, the duration and timing of the intervention were both less than ideal. The intervention was implemented over a period of three weeks with two books towards the end of the school year. As also pointed out by the teacher, the intervention would be more likely to have the desired impact if it were implemented over a longer period of time. For example, the second book was only shared with the children a couple of days before the endline interviews, and most of them had not yet had a chance to read them again at home. A longer book series with additional books relating more of the cross-group friendship would have provided more opportunities for the children to relate with the characters. Both these assertions are supported by Cameron et al. (2006) and Cameron et al. (2011), as well as Tercan et al. (2021), who implemented similar interventions in refugee education contexts via weekly reading sessions over a period of 6 weeks using three books and found more positive outgroup attitudes in the week following the final intervention session. Houlette et al. (2004) implemented a slightly different intervention, focusing on interactive weekly activities over a period of 4 weeks to encourage first and second grade children to play with others who may be different from themselves based on race, sex and weight. Their post-intervention evaluations found that children were more inclusive in selecting their most preferred playmate but biases related to sharing or positive affect of play with different others remained unchanged.

With regard to timing, children in this study had already settled into a pattern of predominantly ingroup friendships and play interactions earlier in the school year. As such, even if the extended contact dimension of the intervention had materialized for them as per the design of the intervention, i.e. high salience of the protagonists' group identities, the likelihood of it leading to new cross-group friendships within the last few weeks of the school year would probably be low. None of the above-cited studies

specified the timing of their interventions. However, the evidence on stability of friendships in the early years is mixed. While Wang et al. (2019) found that preschool children's friendships stabilize and crystallize over the course of a school year, Ladd (1990) found children's friendships in the early years to be relatively temporary.

Even though the desired outcome of more cross-group friendships was not achieved in the duration of the study, the teacher pointed out that the sense of representation and achievement felt by the children in illustrating the second book was empowering for them and would contribute to their social and emotional development. This is supported by the motivational advantage hypothesis in early intervention posited by Reynolds and Ou (2003), whereby experiences of self-efficacy and perceived competence in early years have been found to lead to enhanced social competence in later years.

Furthermore, there were also some encouraging signs for the potential of the intervention in the way that the children engaged with it. For example, host community children reported a familiarity with the Arabic language because they had heard their refugee peers speaking to each other, indicating that gradual exposure to outgroup culture, especially language, was allowing the children to be more resilient to factors that may otherwise be a cause of intergroup anxiety. This is consistent with Crisp & Turner's (2009) predicted benefits of gradual transition across a spectrum of intergroup contact. Another encouraging sign was that children attended closely to each other's drawings in the second book, and in some cases this led to increased appreciation of outgroup members, possibly seeing "other in self" as per Wright et al (1997). If true, this newly acquired viewpoint could also be expected to improve the children's intergroup relations more generally.

5.4. How parents responded to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention

Calabrese Barton et al's (2004) ecologies of parent engagement framework lends itself well to discuss how parents responded to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention and the application of the framework to this aspect of the study is presented in Figure 27 below.

Following the principle of equitable collaboration (Ishimaru, 2019), the school's role in the intervention is also depicted. By enlisting the researcher's support, the school activated capital to create space for the adapted bibliotherapy intervention. Using this opportunity, parents then activated their own capital to author and position themselves into their children's school life. The ideas they sent for the extension of the story of Khaled and Eren included both advice to their children on how to navigate social relations with outgroup members as well as concerns about their academic success. The dynamic interplay of the parent's activated capital and the school's activated capital in the home-based academic space of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention resulted in an artefact in the form of the second book *Khaled and Eren Visit the Seaside*. In the process, school-parent communication was also enhanced.

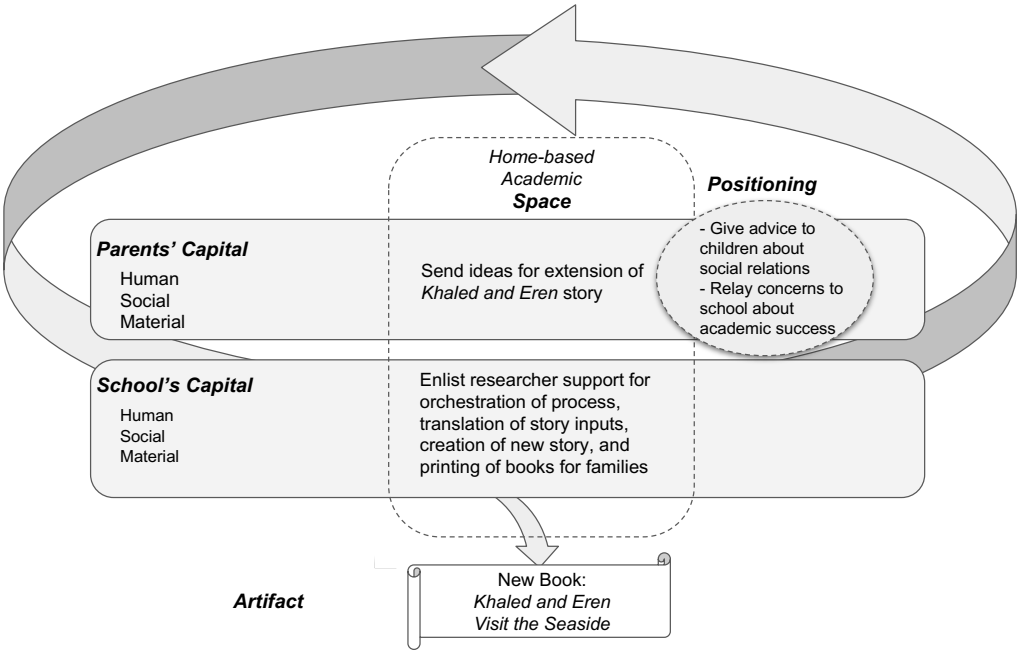


Figure 26. *Parent engagement in the adapted bibliotherapy intervention*

The adapted bibliotherapy intervention successfully engaged the parents of about half the children in the class, with a roughly equal response rate for host community participants and refugee community participants. As a home-based form of parent engagement, requiring no material capital or social capital to be activated for participation by the families, a higher response rate might have been expected. However, taking into account the home situation of the parents who did not engage, as

recommended by the Ecologies of Parent Engagement (EPE) Framework (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004), it turned out that almost all of the families that did not engage with the intervention were preoccupied with illness management or caring for an infant at home, leaving sparse human capital for other activities. In addition, the academic nature of the intervention, whereby the parents had to read a book and write out ideas for the continuation of the story, might have posed challenges for some parents. It should be noted, however, that several parents who did not send inputs for the second story, did read the book with their children at least once, at least the first one. As mentioned in the previous section, the distribution and reading of the second book was marred by time constraints, so it is understandable that not all parents were able to read the second book with the children prior to the endline interviews. The parents' decisions to engage partially or not engage at all with the intervention should not be equated to a lack of interest in and commitment to their child's education, as also cautioned by Karsli-Calamak (2018) and Wang et al. (2019). Furthermore, the active participation of refugee parents, made possible by the provision of translation services, should be noted. Refugee parents' low proficiencies in local language tend to be one of the most frequently cited obstacles for their involvement in schools (Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Ramirez, 2003).

The story inputs for the second book that were received from the parents were overwhelmingly positive in their tone, elaborating on the themes of trust and friendship and introducing new themes of hospitality and reciprocity. This suggests that the extended contact generated through the first book had worked to some extent, leading to more positive attitudes when prompted to imagine further contact. This is consistent with the cascade of positive interactions predicted for intergroup contact (Crisp & Turner, 2009). As one refugee parent emphasized, the first step is the hardest one and then interaction gets more comfortable and relaxed, confirming the trends in intergroup anxiety documented in the literature (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Another interesting finding with regard to intergroup anxiety was the host community parents' comfort with the use of Arabic in addition to Turkish for the intervention, signaling that gradual exposure to the outgroup language through the WhatsApp group had led to reduced anxiety about this aspect of otherness in their school community.

Considering the ecological perspective of parent engagement, it is important to note how the parents mediated space and capital to author space and position themselves (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004), using the creation of the second book as an opportunity to express their concerns and aspirations about intergroup contact. Parents from both communities placed importance on the psychosocial wellbeing of children at school, with parents from the host community also emphasizing academic success. The latter is consistent with what the principal had observed at the outset of the study as being one of the primary concerns of host community parents with regard to the integration of large numbers of refugees into the school. Parents from both communities positioned parents as having an influential role in facilitating children's friendships outside of school, primarily through welcoming attitudes towards outgroup children. This is notable because it indicates an awareness of their own agency in enhancing intergroup contact, which the teacher had flagged as a potential catalyst for improving social cohesion.

During their endline interviews, parents from both communities indicated that they had wanted to use their knowledge and experience to exert influence on intergroup relations. For example, one of the refugee parents confessed she wrote about the importance of trust and friendship as her story input because she wanted her child to internalize these values as it would serve her well for her life in Türkiye. Similarly, one of the host community parents explained that she tried to bring into the book her positive experiences of interacting with her Syrian neighbor because she felt enriched by these cultural exchanges and she wanted children to seek out such exchanges as well. This is reminiscent of the practice of passing culturally-embedded consejos (advice) to children by Mexican American parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Lopez, 2001) and a testament to the "funds of knowledge" that parents possess and can be key for transformational change (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). It also suggests that the collective creation of the second book could serve as what Ishimaru (2019) might call the beginning of a journey of equitable collaboration with parents at this preschool on the issue of social cohesion, whereby a vision has been jointly articulated between the school and the families. In order to prolong this journey and realize the vision, both the school and the families would need to continue to mediate space and capital by listening and responding to each other.

The implementation of the intervention is an example of how schools can exercise their social capital by collaborating with academia. All parents who were interviewed expressed appreciation for the implementation of the intervention, with several of them indicating that they felt valued or respected. Calabrese Barton et al. (2004) highlight the importance of attending to the meaning parents take from engagement initiatives, and this suggests that they received a message of empowerment. While most parents also indicated a belief that such efforts would benefit the children's intergroup relations, one parent insisted that the only way to overcome the divide was for the refugee children to learn the Turkish language and it was up to him as a parent to ensure that his child learnt it, expending his own material resources if necessary. Although this belief was also shared by the principal at the outset, after listening to findings on the language barrier and the refugee parents' interest in their children learning Turkish, he indicated that he would contact the Public Education Center to try and organize Turkish classes at the school for the convenience of refugee families. If followed through, not only would this constitute another exercise of social capital by the school, it would also be responsive to both the needs articulated by the parents and to their context of limited material resources in financially unstable times. As such, it would sustain the ecology of parent engagement.

5.5. How educators responded to the adapted bibliotherapy intervention

Both the teacher and principal highlighted at the beginning of the study that they faced difficulties in communicating with refugee children and parents and that language differences were also the main barrier to more positive and frequent interactions between children from the two communities. They appreciated the collaborative and creative nature of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention and confessed that its implementation helped change their own perspectives. The teacher indicated that it gave her more confidence and ideas to navigate a diverse preschool classroom and the principal came to realize the potential role the school could play to support the Turkish language acquisition of refugee preschoolers. The educators shared insights on the pathways through which they believed the adapted bibliotherapy intervention might

improve social cohesion and expressed support and ideas for the replication and scaling up of the intervention in the Turkish context beyond their own school.

The findings of this study on educators' experiences and insights with regard to the learning and relating challenges created by linguistic differences between host community and refugee community are widely documented in the refugee education literature (Solak & Çelik, 2018; Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Şeker & Sirkeci, 2014). The educators' identification of new roles and strategies for themselves to address linguistic diversity in the classroom is not only reflective of the benefits of pragmatic action research to mobilize stakeholders into more effective action (Greenwood, 2007), but is also a recognition of the inadequacy and perils of the prevailing one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning of refugees in Türkiye which is documented by Kilinc (2019). Furthermore, it also speaks to the lack of training opportunities on inclusive education, culturally responsive pedagogy and second-language learning and resources for Turkish educators engaged in refugee education as noted by Kilinc and Karsli-Calamak (2022).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary of the findings

The qualitative examination of social relations in an Ankara public preschool with half the children from the host community and half the children from the refugee community revealed that cross-group friendships and play interactions among children in this context are limited and shaped by language differences, in-group preferences, play preferences, children's developmental levels and parents' attitudes and behaviors towards cross-group interaction. The role of language, particularly the inability of refugee children to converse in Turkish, was widely acknowledged, including by refugee parents, who lamented that their advice to children to interact more with host community children in order to learn Turkish went unheeded. Parents' interactions with each other, both in-group and cross-group, were also found to be limited, with lack of opportunities to meet emerging as an important factor but hints of intergroup anxiety noted as well. Parents responded positively to the implementation of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention, extending the narrative of the protagonists' cross-group friendship in a positive way, but also using their participation to voice concerns about their children's school life, as well as sharing their aspirations for cross-group relations. However, only one parent in the study, from the host community interestingly, explicitly acknowledged group identities and the benefits of intercultural exchanges across groups. The children in the study did not attend to the group identities of the protagonists in the books but indicated fascination with the characters, enjoyed the process of co-creating the second book and loved seeing their illustrations in the published book. Both children and parents experienced a sense of empowerment as a result of the intervention.

6.2. Researcher's reflections

The process of conducting this research, as well as the findings which emerged from the study, comprised of both anticipated and unanticipated facets. With regard to the process of the research, the time constraints imposed by launching and completing the study within the spring semester, as well as the Turkish and Arabic language limitations of the researcher, did indeed pose challenges for implementing the intervention as had been anticipated, and these were further compounded by difficulties in collective reading and accessing parents. The design of the intervention was predicated on the national ECE curriculum's proposed practices of circle time reading activities and parent involvement in classroom activities. As these were not established practices in the preschool at the time this study was conducted, the children's lack of focus during collective reading and limited parent engagement naturally ensured. On the other hand, the researcher's entry to the field and acceptance within the school community, despite the aforementioned challenges, unfolded remarkably well and exceeded the researcher's own expectations. This also aided the process significantly and ensured shared ownership of the intervention and study with the school.

With regard to the findings of the study, while the positive reactions and empowering potential of the intervention were somewhat anticipated, there were several findings which surprised the researcher. Foremost among these were the social dynamics among the children in the class. Anticipating an experience of social exclusion on the part of refugee children, the researcher was surprised to find them feeling very much at home amid so many other Arabic speakers in the class. At the same time, their relations with Turkish-speaking peers were limited but generally positive. Another surprising finding was that the host community children expressed greater frustration about not being able to communicate and play with their refugee peers, yet they did not fault refugee children for not knowing Turkish. Similarly, host community parents were sympathetic towards refugee families' difficulties with Turkish language acquisition even though they harbored concerns about their own children's academic success in classrooms with high numbers of refugee students with emergent Turkish skills. Finally, it was surprising that refugee children found it difficult to understand

the story despite the bilingual format of the book and reading of the story in Arabic with parents at home, and neither host community children nor refugee children identified with the Turkish or Syrian identities of Eren and Khaled respectively. It begs the question whether other media such as videos might be more effective than books for simulating vicarious cross-group friendships in this context.

Overall, the study was a very rewarding learning experience for the researcher. While the importance of addressing social cohesion between host and refugee communities was reinforced, as well as the opportunities presented by public preschools to do so, it also became clear that innovative approaches to meet the needs of multilingual classrooms were equally needed.

6.3. Implications of the study

Including refugees in public schools alongside citizens in single shifts presents a significant opportunity for schools to play a role in improving social cohesion between the host community and refugee community in Türkiye. At the same time, inaction by schools carries the risk that social cohesion would be undermined by any negative intergroup encounters that occur at the school. Based on the discussion above on how children and parents are navigating social relations and how they engaged with the adapted bibliotherapy intervention, there are certain practical steps the school could take to continue to support social cohesion. These are the subject of this subsection.

The language difference presents practical difficulties for cross-group play and friendship and needs to be addressed first and foremost. Currently there is no large scale institutional or statutory support to refugee families to teach Turkish to young refugee children in or prior to preschool. With the high number of refugees in some schools, this equates to lots of Arabic-speaking peers to play with in class, without having to experience the discomfort of attempting to communicate with Turkish-speaking peers using their emergent Turkish language skills. This practice does not help to advance their Turkish language skills and thereby continues to impede the development of cross-group play patterns and friendships. In order to address this gap, the school could organize play-based Turkish language lessons for refugee children in

the summer before they start preschool. Even a few weeks would go a long way in enhancing children's readiness to engage with host community children once they started preschool. The Summer Preschools intervention developed by the Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), and implemented over a period of 10 weeks, was found to improve the developmental wellbeing and school readiness of 5- and 6-year-old children from host and refugee communities in Türkiye, including the receptive and expressive language skills of refugee children in Turkish which can be expected to enable meaningful interaction with host community peers upon school entry (Erdemir, 2022). The curriculum of Summer Preschools could be instructive for such an initiative and could be adapted to children's needs in the school. In the same vein, once preschool begins, the teacher could regularly plan and implement organized play activities that ensure cross-group interactions between the children by design, and in so doing also help sustain and reinforce the language gains from the summer lessons.

The adapted bibliotherapy intervention does seem to have the potential to reduce intergroup anxiety and increase positive attitudes towards the outgroup among the parents, which can, in turn, influence the children's intergroup attitudes and behaviors. Once the language difference is addressed through preschool lessons, similar effects can be expected for children as well. An extended implementation of the adapted bibliotherapy intervention, launched from the very outset of the school year, before children fall into ingroup play patterns, and continued for an entire semester, could be implemented. The participatory aspect of the intervention is also empowering for both children and parents and results in meaningful and effective family engagement. The intervention could be further enhanced by providing opportunities for direct contact between host community parents and refugee parents within the school. Collaboration on the books could be one excuse for organizing such contact, and other ideas for collaborative endeavors could be explored in consultation with the parents themselves. A jointly crafted vision on intergroup relations can be the beginning of a sustained collaboration between the school and families to enhance intergroup interactions within the school community, and possibly even beyond. Furthermore, recognizing the heterogeneity among parents even within the same ingroup and same neighborhoods, role model parents with positive cross-group attitudes and behaviors could be identified and engaged as volunteers by the school to champion the cause of enhanced

inter-group relations. As such, they could encourage the participation of parents in relevant activities or initiatives, and facilitate alternative ways of participation, with the recognition that all parents have different situations at home and different funds of knowledge at their disposal. This study found role models within the community who are eager to share their experiences with others in their community. Giving them opportunities to do so would be both empowering for them as well as leverage their voice to promote greater social cohesion.

The school could also organize inter-group excursions to cultural, historical or recreational sites for parent-child dyads, helping build a stronger common ingroup identity (such as 'Families of Kindergarten'). This would create opportunities for personalized inter-group encounters for families in relaxed settings, which could serve as positive exemplars and lead to improved overall attitudes towards the outgroup.

At the same time, host community parents' concerns of children's academic success must also be addressed through measures to improve the quality of education in the context of refugee influx. Aboud and Fenwick (1999) point out that the success of attempts to reduce prejudice depends on the extent to which the participants' concerns have been acknowledged and addressed. As indicated by the language-related findings of this study, one area of focus should be to provide teachers with necessary support to teach diverse multilingual classrooms. This has already been acknowledged and recommended in the field of refugee education (Refugee Education Conference Report 2017) and good practices developed in similar contexts could be identified by pedagogical experts and adapted to the Turkish context.

6.4. Limitations of the study

It is rare for studies in refugee education, particularly those focusing on integrational aspects, to examine the perspectives of children, parents and school staff all at once (Vrdoljak, et al., 2002) and to include the experience and concerns of host community children and parents as well. This is perhaps the foremost contribution of this study, apart from its focus on preschool education which is another area requiring more attention in refugee education research and practice. The qualitative approach of the study also gives voice to all its participants which is much needed for more responsive

refugee education policies and programs. However, the study also has several limitations and these are the subject of this subsection.

First, the foreign background of the researcher and the inclusion of both refugee and host communities in the study made it a very multilingual endeavor having to accommodate English, Turkish, Syrian Arabic, Iraqi Arabic and Persian. Given the limited budget available, the support of Turkish, Syrian and Afghan university students in Ankara was enlisted by the researcher for translation and interpretation required during the study, only one of whom was formally trained in interpretation. While efforts were made by the researcher to record interviews and re-visit them with the interpreters later for clarifications as needed, it is entirely possible that not all the perspectives of participants were properly reflected. Ideally, the findings of the study should have been shared with the participants to confirm them but this was not possible due to the study being conducted at the end of the school year.

Second, scheduling interviews with the parents at the school was onerous for them because many of them were not coming to school on a regular basis. Data collection plans were thus revised to conduct interviews with them only at endline, instead of baseline and endline. The validation workshop to discuss parents' ideas for the second book was also cancelled. This compromised the depth of the examination of parents' experiences and ideas, also limiting the empowering aspects of parent engagement. Including parents in the design of the study would have helped to navigate this better.

Third, the materials and processes used in the adapted bibliotherapy intervention were not entirely appropriate for the child participants in this study. The books, while illustrated, contained too much content on each page and too many details for 5-year-olds to attend to. Furthermore, given the multilingual challenges of the class, activities requiring concentration from the children, such as collective reading, had not been very effective in this classroom. Collective reading in two languages was even more challenging. More simplified versions of the books read over multiple sessions would have been more effective. The books and process can be adapted to address these needs of the children.

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APPENDICES

A. HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE ETHICS APPROVAL

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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15 ŞUBAT 2022

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Elif Karslı ÇALAMAK

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Qimti Zehra Paienjton'un "The Potential of a Public Preschool Intervention to Promote Greater Social Cohesion between the Refugee and Host Communities in Turkey."başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **0103-ODTUİAEK-2022** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkan

B. COVER LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Merhaba! İsmim Qimti. Ankara'da üniversite öğrencisiyim. Size çocuğunuzun sınıfında yapacağım eğlenceli bir projeden bahsetmek istiyorum.

Bu proje çocuğunuzun sosyal-duygusal gelişimini destekleyebilecek, etkileşimli çocuk kitabı okuma etkinlikleri kapsayacak. Okul müdürü ve çocuğunuzun öğretmeni bu projeyi yapabilmem için izin verdi. Çocuğunuzun öğretmeni de bana destek olacak. Şimdi de sizden bu projeyi yapabilmek için izin istiyorum. Bir sonraki sayfada detaylı bilgileri okuyabilirsiniz. Bu projeye katılmaya gönüllü iseniz, bir sonraki sayfadaki formu Çarşamba gününe kadar imzalayıp çocuğunuzla geri gönderirseniz çok sevinirim.

Şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

****

Aile Onam Formu

Sayın Velimiz,

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi (ODTÜ) Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği Programında yüksek lisans öğrencisiyim. ODTÜ Okul Öncesi Eğitimi Bölümü öğretim üyesi Dr. Elif Karslı Çalamak'ın danışmanlığında "Devlete Bağlı Anaokulunda Yapılan Bir Uygulamanın Mülteci ve Ev Sahibi Topluluklar Arasında Sosyal Uyumu Desteklemedeki Potansiyeli" isimli yüksek lisans tez çalışmam için bu araştırmayı yürütmekteyim.

Bu kapsamda özellikle 60-72 aylık çocuklar, öğretmenleri ve aileleri ile ilgileniyorum. Çalışmam, katılımcıların okul öncesi dönemde toplumun bir üyesi olma süreçleri ve deneyimlerini inceleyerek okul öncesi dönemde sosyal ilişkilerini geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında elde edilecek bulgular ile, Türkiye'de mültecilerin sosyal uyumunu geliştirmeye yönelik çalışan karar mercilerini yeni tedbirler alınması veya var olan tedbirlerin geliştirilmesi hususunda bilgilendirmek amaçlanmaktadır.

Desteğiniz ve işbirliğinizle, çalışmanın 5-6 haftalık bir süre içinde gerçekleştirilebileceğini umuyorum. Bu sure boyunca, gönüllü olursanız çocuğunuz ve sizinle çeşitli zamanlarda görüşmeler ve MEB Okul Öncesi Eğitimi müfredatında

da ön görülen faaliyetler (hikâye zamanı esnasında bir kitap serisi oluşturma, aile üyelerinin katılımı) yapacağım. Bir kez çalışmanın başında ve bir kez de sonunda olmak üzere sizinle ve çocuğunuzla görüşme yapmak istiyorum. Çocuğunuz ile yapacağım görüşmeyi resim çizme etkinliği sırasında yapacağım. Çocuğunuzun benimle iletişim kurması tamamen isteğine bağlı olup herhangi bir faaliyete başlamadan önce sözlü onayını alacağım. Benimle konuşmak istemezse veya benim düzenleyeceğim kitap okuma etkinliğine katılmak istemezse herhangi bir olumsuz sonuç söz konusu olmaksızın reddetme ve etkinliklerden geri çekilme özgürlüğüne sahip olacaktır. Benimle etkileşime geçip etkinliklere katılığında ise için de her hangi bir ödül verilmeyecektir.

Sizinle yapacağım görüşmelere katılım gönüllülük esasına dayalı olup görüşmeler veya etkinliklere herhangi bir sebep bildirmeksizin katılmayı reddetme veya herhangi bir zamanda araştırmadan çekilme özgürlüğüne sahipsiniz. Bu araştırmaya katılan kişilere herhangi bir ücret (nakdi veya ayni) verilmeyecektir. Katılımınızı gerektiren etkinliğin ayrıntıları, öğretmen ile işbirliği içerisinde sizlere duyurulacaktır. Genel olarak, çocuğunuzla eve hikayeler göndereceğim ve o hikayeleri evde çocuğunuz ile birlikte tamamlamanızı ve yeni hikaye için fikirlerinizi çocuğunuz ile okula geri göndermenizi isteyeceğim.

İzniniz olursa çocuğunuzun sınıfınızda bu araştırmayı yapmayı planlıyorum. Sizinle yapacağım bireysel görüşmeler sırasında ses kaydı almayı planlıyorum. Toplayacağım veriler başka kimseyle paylaşılmayacaktır. Her bir uygulama sınıfın gündelik akışına zarar vermeyecek bir şekilde yapılacak olup bahse konu veriler çalışma süresince ODTÜ bünyesinde uygun bir yerde güvenli bir şekilde muhafaza edilecek ve daha sonra imha edilecektir. Bu araştırmada yer alan hiç bir aşama kişisel rahatsızlık verecek nitelikte değildir ve risk teşkil etmez. Bu çalışma için toplanan tüm bilgiler gizli kalacaktır. Katılımcıların isimleri veya tanımlanmalarını sağlayabilecek diğer bilgileri paylaşılmayacak veya yayınlanmayacaktır.

Sayın öğretmenim, çalışmama gösterdiğiniz ilgi için teşekkürlerimi sunarım.

_____ (İmza)

Qimti Zehra Paienjton

Yukarıda açıklamalarını okuduğum araştırmaya katılmak istiyorum.

Adınız Soyadınız: _____ İmza: _____

Tarih: _____

Yukarıda sunulan açıklamalarını okuduğum araştırmaya **çocuğumun katılmasına** izin veriyorum.

Adınız Soyadınız: _____ İmza: _____

Tarih: _____

****

Lütfen imzalı formu Qimti Zehra Paienjton'a teslim ediniz.

C. INTERVIEW GUIDES

C.1. Interview Guide for Baseline Interview with Parents

Hello! I am Qimti and I am currently a Master's student at the Middle East Technical University in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education. I am originally from Pakistan but I have been working and living overseas for over 15 years, mainly to promote children's rights to basic social services in various countries.

1. Would you like to briefly introduce yourself too?
2. What are your observations about your child's social relations in school?
  2.1 What are your observations about your child's social relations with his/her peers outside of school?
  2.2 Do you know your child's friends in school? Who are his/her friends?
  2.3 What do you know about the nature of their friendship and interactions?
3. Does your child face any social problems in school or on the way to/from school?
4. What are your relations like with other parents?
5. What is your interaction with the school like?
6. How has your experience been living in a diverse community?

C.2. Interview Guide for Endline Interview with Parents

1. What are your observations about your child's social relations in school since we last spoke?
  1.1.1. What are your observations about your child's social relations with his/her peers outside of school since we last spoke?
  1.1.2. Have you noticed any changes in your child's friendships at school since we last spoke? Please elaborate.
  1.1.3. Has your child faced any social problems in school or on the way to/from school since we last spoke? Please elaborate.
2. What are your relations like with other parents?
3. What is your interaction with the school like?
4. How is your experience living in a diverse community?
5. What do you think about the process of the intervention implemented in the classroom?
6. How was your own experience during the process?
7. What are your observations about your child's experiences during the process?
8. Was the intervention implemented in the classroom useful? How/why?
9. What would you change about it?

C.3. Interview Guide for Baseline Interview with Children

1. Would you draw “my freeplay time at school” for me?
2. What is happening in your picture? Who is there? What are they doing?
3. Who is your best friend in the class? Who else? [Individual photos of each child in the class will be available for children to select from as they answer this question.]
4. What do you know/like about your friend?
5. How are you and your friend the same?
6. How are you and your friend different?
7. What makes you happy about coming to school?
8. Is there anything that makes you sad about coming to school? What is that?
9. Do you ever meet or play with your friends outside school? Which ones? Where did you meet? What did you do?

C.4. Interview Guide for Endline Interview with Children

1. Would you draw “my free play time at school” for me?
2. What is happening in your picture? Who is there? What are they doing?
3. Who is your best friend in the class? Who else? [Individual photos of each child in the class will be available for children to select from as they answer this question.]
4. What do you know/like about your friend?
5. How are you and your friend the same?
6. How are you and your friend different?
7. What makes you happy about coming to school?
8. Is there anything that makes you sad about coming to school? What is that?
9. Do you ever meet or play with your friends outside school? Which ones? Where did you meet? What did you do?
10. Did you enjoy the intervention implemented in the classroom?
11. What did you like about it?
12. What did you not like about it?
13. Here are some photos of what we have been doing. Which one should we talk about? What is happening in this photo? What did we learn/achieve from this part of the intervention?

C.5. Interview Guide for Baseline Interview with Teachers

1. What are your general observations about the state of integration of Syrian children in the classroom?
2. Are there instances of friendship or empathy between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
3. Are there instances of aggression between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
4. What is your interaction with parents like?
5. How has your experience been teaching in a diverse community?

C.6. Interview Guide for Endline Interview with Teachers

1. What is the state of integration of Syrian children in the classroom?
2. Are there instances of friendship or empathy between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
3. Are there instances of aggression between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
4. What is your interaction with parents like?
5. What are your overall observations about the process of the intervention implemented in the classroom?
6. What are your observations about the children's experience of the intervention implemented in the classroom?
7. What are your observations about the parents' experience of the intervention implemented in the classroom?
8. How was your experience of the intervention implemented in the classroom?
9. Was the intervention implemented in the classroom useful? How/why?
10. What would you change about it?
11. Did you face any challenges while integrating the intervention implemented in the classroom to your curriculum for this semester?
12. How did you address these challenges?

C.7. Interview Guide for Baseline Interview with the School Principal

1. What is the state of integration of Syrian children in the school?
2. Are there instances of friendship or empathy between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
3. Are there instances of aggression between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
4. What is your interaction with Syrian parents like?
5. How has your experience been working with a diverse community?

C.8. Interview Guide for Endline Interview with the School Principal

1. What is the state of integration of Syrian children in the school?
2. Are there instances of friendship or empathy between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
3. Are there instances of aggression between children from the two communities? How often? What triggers these?
4. What are your impressions/observations about the intervention implemented in the classroom and how the process was experienced by different members of the school community?

D. SAMPLE LETTER FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN INTERVENTION

Ipek'in Sevgili Ailesi,

Sizinle, birkaç yıl önce yazmış olduğum "Khaled ve Eren Arkadaş Oluyorlar" isimli kitabı paylaşmaktan mutluluk duyuyorum. Bu kitabı İngilizce yazdım. Ben Pakistan'da büyüdüm ama evimizde daha çok İngilizce konuşulurdu. Bu sebeple, İngilizce'de kendimi daha rahat hissediyorum. Bu kitap için hayalim çokdilli bir formatta yazılmasıydı çünkü dil engeline takılmadan pek çok kişinin bu çocuk kitabını okumasını ve eğlenmesini istedim. Şanslıydım çünkü Türk arkadaşım Burcu bu konuda bana yardım etti ve İngilizce yazdığım bu kitabı Türkçe'ye çevirdi. Suriyeli arkadaşım Muhammed ise bu kitabı Arapça'ya çevirdi. Portekizli arkadaşım Rita kitabın resimlerini çizerken, Afgan arkadaşım Nahid bu kitabı Farsça'ya çevirdi. Bu bahsettiğim insanların hepsi Ankara'da yaşarken edindiğim değerli arkadaşlarım.

Bugün Selin öğretmenin de yardımıyla, çocuğunuzun sınıfında bu kitabı okuduk ve çocuklar çok eğlendi. Bu kitabın sonunda Khaled, Eren'e bir söz veriyor. "Sana ödevinde yardım edeceğim" diyor. Sonrasında ne olacağını birlikte hayal edelim mi? Khaled ve Eren'in evleri yakın. Yanlarına anasınıfına giden küçük kızkardeşleri Amira ve Damla'yı da alıp birlikte eve gidiyorlar. Sizce sonra neler oluyor?

Evinizde çocuğunuz, eşiniz, ya da sizinle yaşayan akrabalarınız ile hep birlikte bu hikâyenin devamında neler olabileceğini birlikte hayal edin. İsterseniz uzun şekilde, isterseniz kısa notlar halinde bu hikâyenin devamında neler olacağını lütfen yazın.

Size gönderdiğim beyaz kağıdı kullanarak, yazıyı istediğiniz dilde yazabilirsiniz. Ben yine arkadaşlarımdan destek alarak çevirisini yapar ve sizi anlarım. Siz ailelerden gelen fikirlere göre yeni bir hikaye oluşturacağım ve haftaya sizinle paylaşacağım. Eminim ki hep birlikte katkı sağlayarak çocuklar için güzel bir hikâye serisi oluşturacağız.

Yazılı fikirlerinizi Selin öğretmene 17 Mayıs Salı gününe kadar gönderirseniz çok sevinirim. Yazınızı, zarfı kullanarak çocuğunuz aracılığı ile okula gönderebilirsiniz. Kitap ve kalem sizde kalabilir ☺

Sevgilerimle,
Qimti

E. INDICATED FRIENDS AND PLAYMATES OF CHILDREN

Table E.1. *Friends and playmates of host community children*

Child	Friends according to self		Playmates according to self		Friends according to parent
	At baseline	At endline	At baseline	At endline	
Efe	Zuhal, Burcu, Ipek		Azad		
Burcu	Zuhal, Nahla	Didem, Safa			Zuhal, Erdem, Ilay, Didem
Ilay	Safa, Ubaid, Azad, Nahla, Zuhal, Didem, Erdem	Isra, Didem, Zuhal, Azad			
Zuhal	DidemSu, Burcu, Ilay, Yamna		Burcu, Didem	Didem, Isra, Zahra, Safa	Didem
Erdem	Azad, Zuhal, Ilay	Azad	Azad	Azad	
Ipek	Zuhal, Didem, Efe, Ilay, Burcu	Zuhal, Didem, Safa, Zahra.	Zuhal, Efe	Zuhal, Didem, Burcu	

Table E.2. *Friends and playmates of refugee children*

Child	Friends according to self		Playmates according to self		Friends according to parent
	At baseline	At endline	At baseline	At endline	
Safa	Zahra, Ubaid	"No Turkish friends (had a falling out)"			Ubaid, Zahra, Ilay, Isra
Zahra	Isra, Ubaid, Safa	Safa, Isra, Ubaid	Zuhal, Didem	Burcu, Zuhal, Didem	Isra, Safa, Azad, Ubaid
Nahla	Safa, Azad, Rabab	Rabab, Ubaid	Isra, Ubaid, Zuhal		Zahra, Isra
Ubaid	Aisha (she is my cousin), Safa	All of them are Syrian	Safa, Erdem, Ilay, Azad, Aisha	Erdem	Isra, Aisha
Azad	Ubaid, Safa	Ubaid, Safa, Zahra.	Zahra, Nahla, "the Turks" (Zuhal, Ipek)		Ubaid, Zahra, Ilay, Isra

Table E.2 (continued). *Friends and playmates of refugee children*

Child	Friends according to self		Playmates according to self		Friends according to parent
	At baseline	**At endline**	**At baseline**	**At endline**	
Aisha	Safa, Zahra	My Turkish friends are: Zuhal, DidemSu, Burcu, Ilay	Ubaid, Safa, Isra	Safa, Azad, Ubaid, Isra, Nahla	
Rabab	Zuhal, Isra, Azad, Ubaid, Ilay	Ilay, Zuhal, Erdem	Mustafa, Azad, Zuhal, Safa		
Isra	Zuhal, Ilay and Didem, Ipek (in presence of father)		Ubaid, Safa, Rabab, Azad, Zuhal.		
Yamna	Zuhal, Didem		Zuhal, Didem		

F. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

GİRİŞ

Problem Tanımı ve Araştırma Soruları

Bu çalışmanın odak noktasını mülteci çocukların, ev sahibi topluluklara mensup çocuklar ile birlikte Türkiye'deki devlet anaokullarına katılımı ve bu durumun sosyal uyum açısından araştırılması oluşturmaktadır. Türkiye, Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı (2023) verilerine göre dünyada en çok mülteciye ev sahipliği yapan ülke olup 2022 yılında ülkede yaşayan mülteci sayısı 3,8 milyonu aşarken, mültecilerin 3.500.000'i Geçici Koruma Altındaki Suriyelilerden (GKAS) oluşmaktadır. Türkiye'de bulunan mültecilerin çoğu, mülteci kamplarında değil, ülkenin dört bir yanında ev sahibi topluluklara mensup vatandaşlar ile birlikte yaşamakta olsa da toplumuna entegrasyonları sınırlı düzeyde kalmıştır. Mültecilerin ülkedeki sosyal uyum durumu da istikrarlı bir nitelikte değildir. Ev sahibi topluluk arasında mülteci topluluğuna yönelik olumsuz sayılabilecek söylemlerin kullanıldığı gözlemlenmekte (Erdemir, 2020) ve Suriyeliler, Türkiye'de medya aracılığı ile de büyük oranda olumsuz basmakalıp düşünceler ve önyargılar ile karşılaşmaktadırlar (Nisan Emin, 2016). Bu durumun, aynı okullara gittikleri için hem mülteci hem de yerel çocukların sosyal ve ilişkisel gelişimi açısından sorunlara yol açma ihtimali vardır.

Okul, yukarıda bahsi geçen entegrasyon eksikliğini giderme anlamında kritik bir rol oynar. T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı, okul öncesi yaştaki çocukların % 45'i de dahil olmak üzere, Türkiye genelinde toplam 972.792 mülteci çocuğun devlet okullarına kaydolmasını sağlamıştır (3RP, 2023). Yerel ve mülteci çocukların birbiriyle sosyalleştikleri ilk yer olması nedeniyle devlet anaokulları, özellikle ulusal Erken Çocukluk Dönemi Eğitimi (EÇE) müfredatında ailenin sürece katılmasına yapılan vurgu da düşünüldüğünde

Türkiye'de yukarıda bahsi geçen sorunların giderilmesi anlamında ideal bir bağlam niteliğindedir. Ayrıca küçük çocuklar, "farklılıklar ile yakından ilgilenmektedir" (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009, s. 195) ve çocukların hangi gruplara ait olduklarını ve olmadıklarını anlamaları, anaokulu gibi erken çocukluk dönemi eğitim ve bakım hizmeti veren ortamlarında şekil almaya başlamaktadır (Vandenbroeck, 1999). Son olarak anaokulları ve çocukların anaokullarında geliştirdikleri ilişkiler, çocuk gelişiminin ve refahının kuramsallaştırıldığı biyoekolojik insan gelişimi teorisi uyarınca (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) temel nitelikte bir mikrosistem olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Genel anlamda bu çalışma, aşağıda yer alan araştırma sorularına cevap vermeyi amaçlamaktadır:

1. Türkiye'de, çocukların yarısının ev sahibi topluluktan, yarısının ise mülteci topluluktan oluştuğu, çeşitlilik arz eden bir anasınıfında çocuklar birbiriyle sosyal olarak nasıl ilişki kurmaktadır?
2. Türkiye'de, çocukların yarısının ev sahibi topluluktan, yarısının ise mülteci topluluktan oluştuğu, çeşitlilik arz eden bir anasınıfına mensup çocukların aileleri okul bağlamında sosyal ilişkilerini nasıl yürütmektedir?
3. Okul ortamını oluşturan kişiler (çocuklar, aileler, eğitimciler), böyle bir anasınıfında sosyal uyumu desteklemek için uyarlanmış bir bibliyoterapi müdahalesine nasıl tepki vermiştir?
4. Böyle bir anasınıfı ortamında, uyarlanmış bibliyoterapinin uygulanması açısından, uygulamaya dönük hangi önemli hususlar ön plana çıkmıştır?

Araştırmada Kullanılan Önemli Terimlerin Tanımı

Bu çalışmada sıklıkla kullanılan, öneme sahip bazı terimler aşağıda açıklanmıştır.

Sosyal uyum: Herkesin refahının düşünüldüğü ve toplumun tüm üyelerine aidiyet hissinin aşılandığı, toplumun farklı kesimleri arasındaki karşılıklı güven durumu. Bu çalışma bağlamında çocukların arkadaş ve oyun arkadaşı tercihleri, mevcut ortam ve zaman diliminde üzerinde çalışılabilecek, sosyal uyuma en uygun somut göstergeler olmuştur.

Müdahale: Tespit edilmiş bir sorunu gidermek üzere atılan birtakım adımlar. Bu çalışma bağlamında müdahale, ev sahibi topluluğa mensup çocuklar ile mülteci çocuklar arasında sınıf ortamındaki empati ve arkadaşlık duygusunu desteklemek üzere araştırmacı ve eğitmen tarafından atılan ortak adımlar anlamına gelmektedir.

Bibliyoterapi: Sorunlar ile ilgili tartışma başlatmak, yeni değer ve davranış biçimlerini anlatmak ve/veya sorunlara yönelik içgörü ve çözüm yolu sağlamak üzere terapist eşliğinde veya terapist olmadan kitaplardan yararlanılması. Bu çalışma bağlamında, terapist olmadan, anasınıfındaki çeşitliliği ele almak üzere fikirler ortaya koyup empati ve arkadaşlık değerlerini desteklemek amacıyla iki kitaptan yararlanılmıştır.

Uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi: Katılımcıların ihtiyaçlarını daha iyi karşılamayı amaçlayan, çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda uyarlanmış bir bibliyoterapi müdahalesi. Bu çalışma bağlamında, hem ev sahibi hem de mülteci topluluklardan çocukların ve ailelerin katılımıyla *Khaled ve Eren Deniz Kıyısına Gidiyorlar* adlı ikinci bir kitap hazırlanmıştır. Böylece sosyal ortamlarındaki çeşitlilik ve uyumun tartışılması konularında bu topluluklara söz hakkı verilmiştir.

Çalışmanın Önemi

Yerel paydaşlar ile işbirliği ve deneme yapılarak bilgi üretilen (Levin ve Greenwood, 2001; Boog, 2003) ve pragmatik bir davranış araştırması olarak tasarlanan bu çalışma, mülteci eğitimi alanında karşılaşılan çeşitli eksiklikleri ele almaya çalışmaktadır. Bu çalışmada öncelikle, uygulamaya dönük ve eylem odaklı bileşen vasıtasıyla, Bouchane vd. (2018) tarafından önerildiği üzere erken çocukluk döneminde gruplar arası ilişkilerin ilerletilmesi adına hem anasınıfı çocuklarını hem de ailelerini kapsayacak şekilde iki katmanlı bir müdahale uygulaması geliştirilip araştırılmaktadır. İkinci olarak, sosyal uyumu desteklemek için ev sahibi ve mülteci toplulukların kaynaşmasını sağlama amacı taşıyan bu çalışma, her iki tarafın da, Türkiye'deki sınıflarda artan çeşitlilik durumundan etkilendiğini ve sosyal uyumu ilerletmeyi sağlama konusunda her iki tarafa da görev düştüğünü kabul etmektedir. Erdal ve Oeppen'in (2013) belirttiği üzere bu tür ikili bir odaklanma, mültecilerin asimile olması gerektiği ve ev sahibi topluluğun değişmesine gerek olmadığı beklentisine karşı

çıkma anlamında da önemlidir. Üçüncü olarak, mülteci ve ev sahibi topluluklardan çocukların ve ailelerin çalışmaya dahil edilmesi, onların da temsil edildiğini gösterip bireysel ve kolektif olarak düşüncelerinden yararlanılmasını sağlamaktadır. Bu durum, çocukların düşüncelerinin, mülteci eğitimine ilişkin literatürde kendine yer bulamadığı tespit edildiği için (Kılınç & Karslı-Çalamak, 2022) önemlidir. Bu sebeple, bu çalışmada çocuklar, aileleri, öğretmen ve okul müdürü de dahil olmak üzere tüm anasınıfı paydaşlarının görüş açıları değerlendirilmektedir. Bu durumun, sosyal uyum veya entegrasyona odaklı çalışmalarda nadir rastlanan bir durum olduğunun altı çizilmelidir (Vrdoljak ve ark., 2022). Birden fazla paydaştan görüş alınması, benzer sınıf ortamlarında sosyal ilişkilerin geliştirilmesine yönelik çalışmalara ışık tutma anlamında çok değerli olacaktır. Son olarak araştırmanın bir sonucu olarak yerinden edilmiş çocukların yaşadıklarını anlatan çocuk kitabı serisinin iki kitabından birincisi de kullanıma hazırdır. Tüm bu nedenlerden ötürü bu çalışmanın, mülteci eğitimi literatürüne bir katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

YÖNTEM

Araştırma Deseni

Bu araştırma, devlete bağlı bir anasınıfı gibi sınırlı bir sistem içerisinde mülteci ve ev sahibi topluluklar arasındaki sosyal uyum konusuna odaklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu tek olguyu, sınırlı bir sistem içerisinde ele alabilmek için vaka analizinin (Yin, 2003) en uygun yaklaşım olacağı düşünülmüştür. Bu kapsamda çocuklarla, aileleriyle, öğretmen ve okul müdürüyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin yanı sıra araştırmacının sınıf içi gözlemleri de dahil olmak üzere birden fazla kaynaktan veri toplanmıştır. Çocukların çizimleri ve ailelerin gönderdiği hikâye girdileri de veri olarak kullanılmıştır. Tüm bu veriler, sınıf mensupları arasındaki sosyal uyum durumu, uygulanan müdahale vasıtasıyla yakınlaşmaları ve uygulama sırasında çıkarılan dersler ile ilgili bütüncül bir anlatım oluşturmak amacıyla kullanılmıştır. Nitel araştırma alanında tek bir gerçeklikten söz edilemeyecek olsa da Lincoln ve Guba (1985) tarafından önerildiği üzere çalışmanın güvenilirliğini sağlamak için araştırmacı

tarafından uzun görüşme (prolonged engagement), sürekli gözlem (persistent observation), üçgenleme (triangulation) ve akran bilgilendirme (peer debriefing) yöntemlerinden yararlanılmıştır.

Araştırma Bağlamı

Çalışma, Ankara'nın Altındağ ilçesinde bulunan devlete ait bir anaokulunun iki anasınıfından birinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de mültecilerin en çok ikamet ettiği 10 şehirden biri olarak 90.000'i aşkın GKA Suriyeliye ev sahipliği yapan Ankara'da (GİB, 2023) gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu durum da, çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda, seçilen katılımcıların gerekli özelliklere ve deneyime sahip olduğu (Creswell, 2007) karma bir anasınıfın seçilmesine olanak sağlamıştır. Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi'nden alınan İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurul izni ve Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı'ndan alınan araştırma izni sonrasında, sosyal medya ve telefon üzerinden öğretmenlere ve okul müdürüne ulaşılmıştır. Belirlenen okulda okuyan öğrencilerin yaklaşık olarak yarısı ev sahibi topluluğa, yarısı ise mülteci topluluğa mensup çocuklardan oluşmaktadır. Okula ziyaret ve okul personeli ile görüşme sonrasında belirlenen anasınıfında, ev sahibi topluluktan 7 öğrenci, mülteci topluluktan ise 10 öğrenci bulunmaktadır. Sınıf, ilkokulun birinci katındadır ve karşısında başka bir anasınıfı daha yer almaktadır. Bu iki sınıfın okulun geri kalanından erişilmesini kısıtlayan kapalı bir koridoru bulunmaktadır.

Katılımcılar

Bu çalışmaya katılan 15 çocuk arasında 7 Suriyeli çocuk (5 kız çocuk, 2 erkek çocuk), 6 Türk çocuk (4 kız çocuk, 2 erkek çocuk), 1 Iraklı çocuk (kız çocuk) ve 1 Afgan çocuk (kız çocuk) yer almıştır. Yaşı nispeten daha küçük olan bir çocuk ile nispeten daha büyük olan iki çocuk dışında çalışmaya katılan 15 çocuğun tamamı 5-6 yaşındadır. Ailelerden ise 13 çocuğun ebeveyni çalışmaya katılmaya rıza gösterse de dönem sonundaki zaman kısıtlılıkları nedeniyle 9'u ile görüşme gerçekleştirilebilmiştir. Bu 9 kişiden 8'i anne (4 Suriyeli, 3 Türk,1 Iraklı), 1'i ise babadır (Suriyeli). Öğretmen (kadın) ve okul müdürü (erkek) uygulanan müdahale kapsamında hem katılımcı hem de eş-kolaylaştırıcı olarak yer almıştır.

Veri Toplama Süreci ve Yöntemleri

Gerekli izinler alındıktan sonra Nisan-Haziran 2022 tarihleri arasında 25 okul günü içerisinde gözlemler ve görüşmeler ile veri toplanmıştır. Buna, çalışma sonunda aileler ile yapılan tek tur görüşme ile çocuklar ve eğitimciler ile biri uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi uygulamasından önce, biri de sonra olmak üzere yapılan iki farklı görüşme de dahildir. Görüşmeler, çocukların okulda olmaması veya sınıf faaliyetleri nedeniyle görüşmenin mümkün olmadığı zamanlarda gözlem ile birleştirilmiştir.

Ek D'de sunulmuş olan görüşme kılavuzlarından yararlanarak tüm çalışma katılımcıları ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Freeman ve Mathison (2009) tarafından önerildiği üzere çocuklarla yapılan görüşmelerde çizimler ve fotoğraf seçimi de dahil olmak üzere çocuk dostu araştırma tekniklerinden yararlanılmıştır. Bu durum, çocukların deneyimlerini sentezlemesine ve bunları sözlü ifade dışında karşı tarafa iletmelerine olanak sağlarken araştırmacının da çocukların fikirlerini, yaratıcı ve çocuklarda baskı oluşturmayacak bir biçimde edinmesini sağlamıştır.

Müdahalenin Uygulanma Süreci

İlk görüşmeler tamamlandıktan sonra *Khaled ve Eren Arkadaş Oluyorlar* adlı ilk kitap, öğretmen tarafından sınıfta yüksek sesle okunmuş ve ardından bir tercüman tarafından Arapçaya tercüme edilmiştir. Bu kitapta Suriyeli baş kahraman Khaled, empati ve anlayış göstererek teneffüs sırasında okul bahçesinde bunalmış şekilde bir ağacın altında köşesine çekilen Türk baş kahraman Eren'e yardım eli uzatır. İki çocuk, arkadaşlık geliştirmiştir ve Eren'in teşekkür niteliğinde kendisine sarılması, Khaled'e ait olmanın nasıl hissettirdiğini hatırlatır. Bu hikâye okulda hep beraber okunduktan sonra her çocuğa eve götürmek üzere kitabın bir nüshası ile birlikte kitaptaki hikâyenin devamı için ailelerden fikir talep eden bir mektup gönderilmiştir. Ailelerin fikirleri alındıktan sonra bu fikirler, çocuk dostu bir oyun formatında sınıfta çocuklarla birlikte tartışılmış ve çocuklardan ikinci kitap için resimler çizmeleri istenmiştir. Daha sonra katılımcılardan alınan fikirler ve çizimler ışığında araştırmacı tarafından ikinci hikâye oluşturulmuş ve öğretmenden ilk taslak ile ilgili geribildirim istenmiştir. İki baş

kahraman arasındaki arkadaşlığın daha da geliştiğinin gözlendiği *Khaled ve Eren Deniz Kıyısına Gidiyor* adlı ikinci kitap, sınıftaki tüm çocukların ve pek çok ailenin katılımıyla hazırlanmıştır. Kitap, öğretmen tarafından sınıfta yüksek sesle okunmuş, tekrar ardıl tercüme ile Arapçaya tercüme edilmiş ve her çocuğa eve götürmek üzere bir nüshası verilmiştir. Bu sürecin ardından katılımcılar ile son görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Veri Analizi

Her görüşmenin deşifre metni, birkaç kez okunmuş ve araştırma notları ön görüş olarak kayda geçilmiştir. Veri analizi için temel yaklaşım olarak tematik analizden (Braun ve Clarke, 2006) yararlanılmasıyla birlikte önemli ifadeler, renklerle kodlanmış ve konularına göre kategorilere ayrılmış ve her bir konuya ait önemli kavramlar, bulguları bir araya getirmek üzere birlikte analiz edilmiştir. Verilerin gruplar arası benzerlikler ve farklılıklar temelinde kategorilere ayrılmasının yanı sıra, Maxwell ve Miller (2008) tarafından açıklandığı üzere verilerin bitiştirilmesi veya ilişkili hale getirilmesi yöntemiyle de bağlantılar oluşturulmuştur. Ayrıca, Stake'in (1995) vaka çalışmalarında veriyi analiz etme ve yorumlama yaklaşımından yola çıkılarak çocuklarla yapılan görüşmeler, aileler ile yapılan görüşmeler veya araştırmacının gözlemleri gibi başka örneklerden de yararlanıp kategorik olarak kümelenmiştir. Veri analiz sürecinin sonunda görüşme deşifrelerine ilişkin araştırma notları, tematik analiz yapılırken gözden kaçan bir şey olup olmadığını belirlemek amacıyla yeniden incelenmiştir.

BULGULAR VE TARTIŞMA

Çocukların, anaokulunda akranlarıyla etkileşimlerini yürütmesi

Bu çalışma sonucunda ev sahibi topluluğa mensup çocuklar ile mülteci çocuklar arasında gruplar arası arkadaşlığın ve oyun etkileşiminin sınırlı olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Arkadaşlık ve oyun etkileşiminin sınırlı olmasının temel nedeni, iki topluluğa mensup çocuklar arasındaki dil farkı olarak belirlenmiştir. Mülteci çocuklar,

Türkçe öğrenme sürecinde oldukları için çoğunlukla komşuları ve okul dışında oyun arkadaşları olan Arapça bilen diğer mülteci çocuklar ile arkadaş olmayı ve oyun oynamayı tercih etmektedir. Ev sahibi topluluğa mensup çocuklar ise mülteci akranları tarafından anlaşılmamalarına ve onları anlamamalarına ilişkin hayal kırıklığı benzeri duygular hissettiklerini aktarmışlardır. Gruplar arası arkadaşlığın geliştiği noktalarda ailelerin gruplar arası ilişkilere yönelik tavırları ve davranışları, çocukların gelişim düzeyleri ve çocukların sözsüz oyun faaliyetlerine yönelik ortak tercihleri, arkadaşlıklarını kolaylaştıran faktörler arasında yer almıştır. Ailelerin gruplar arası ilişkilere bakışının ise, hem kendilerinin hem de yaşı büyük çocuklarının sosyal deneyimlerinden etkilendiği görülmüştür.

Çocukların arkadaşlık biçimlerine yönelik bu iki yönlü etkileşim, Bronfenbrenner'in biyoekolojik insan gelişim modeli (1979) ile de tutarlıdır. Türkçe konuşma yeterliliği başta olmak üzere aile tavırlarının da mülteci çocukların akran ilişkilerini etkilediği başka çalışmalarda da görülmüştür (Özger & Akansel, 2019). Bu çalışmada yer alan hem mülteci hem ev sahibi topluluğa mensup çocukların, sosyal etkileşimlerine genel olarak Brewer ve Miller'in (1984) kişiselleştirme merceğinden (yani grup kimliklerine dikkat etmeden) baktığı görülmüştür. Ancak dil farkı, grup içi ve grup dışı kimlikleri bazı durumlarda ön plana çıkarmış ve dil farkının çocukların kendi dillerini konuşan çocuklar ile oyun oynamayı veya arkadaş olmayı tercih etmelerine neden olduğu görülmüştür. Aboud (2003) grup içi iltimas göstermenin yaklaşık 5 yaşında kendini göstermeye başladığını, bu yaş grubunda grup dışı önyargının daha zayıf olduğunu ancak grup içi akranlara yönelik güçlü bir iltimas gösterme hissi nedeniyle grup dışındaki akranların sıkıntılar yaşayabildiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu durum, anaokulu çağındaki çocuklar arasında kendi topluluğundan akranları tercih etmenin, her zaman diğer topluluğa mensup akranlarına karşı olumsuz tavır göstergesi olmayabileceğini işaret etmesi bakımından önemlidir. Akgün vd. ise (2018) dört-beş yaşındaki çocukların, altı-yedi yaşındaki çocuklara oranla daha olumlu tavırlar sergileme eğiliminde olduğunu tespit etmiş ve bu tür tavırları pekiştirme anlamında çeşitlilik barındıran karma anaokullarının sağladığı fırsatlara dikkat çekerek çocukların olumsuz tavırlarını etraflarındaki yetişkinlere bağlamıştır.

Ailelerin anaokulu bağlamında sosyal etkileşimleri yürütmesi

Bu çalışmada, ev sahibi topluluğa mensup aileler ile mülteci ailelerinin birbiriyle ve kendi içlerinde etkileşiminin sınırlı olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ailelerin görüşme imkanlarının olmaması, etkileşimlerini sınırlandıran en önemli faktör olurken, bu durum diğer pek çok faktör ile daha da şiddetlenmektedir. Örneğin, araştırma sonuçlarına göre artan enflasyonun yanı sıra, sosyal izolasyonun arttığı pandemi sonrası içinde bulunulan durum, ailelerin sosyal hayata öncelik vermesine ket vurmuştur. Ayrıca mülteci ailelerin okul içinde ve dışında ırkçılık olarak algıladığı olaylar, gruplar arası etkileşim arama motivasyonlarını azaltmıştır. Son olarak çocuklarda olduğu gibi ailelerde de dil farklılıkları, iletişim ve etkileşim bakımından sorun teşkil etmiş ve etkileşimin olmaması, mülteci aileler açısından sadece temel düzeyde Türkçe konuşulması durumunun devam etmesine neden olmuştur. Mülteci aileler, Türkçe öğrenmeleri için çocuklarının ev sahibi topluluğa mensup çocuklarla oyun oynamaları dileklerini ısrarla dile getirirken ev sahibi topluluğa mensup aileler de iki topluluğa mensup çocukların arkadaş olabilmeleri ve birlikte oyun oynamaları için mülteci çocukların Türkçe öğrenmesine yönelik isteklerini dile getirmiştir.

Mülteci ailelerin çocuklarının Türkçe öğrenmesini istemesine dair bu bulguya, Türkiye'de mülteci aileler ile yapılan diğer çalışmalarda da rastlanmıştır (Erdemir, 2022; Karslı-Çalamak vd., 2022). Ailelerin kendi aralarında gruplar arası iletişime yönelik tavırları ile ilgili olarak düzenli olarak bir araya gelme fırsatının olmaması her iki topluluğa mensup aileler tarafından dile getirilse de bazı mülteci aileler, dil becerilerinin yetersiz olması sonucunda utangaçlık duymaları veya okul dışında ev sahibi topluluktan gördüklerini paylaştıklarını önyargılar nedeniyle gruplar arası iletişimde bulunma konusunda isteksiz olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Azınlık toplulukların, çoğunluk tarafından reddedilme korkusu, başka çalışmalarda da kayda geçmiş bir durumdur (Shelton & Richeson, 2005) ve bu durum diğer topluluk tarafından önyargılı yaklaşılma korkusunun yanı sıra gruplar arası kaygı olgusuna da katkı sağlayan ana faktörlerden biridir (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

Katılımcıların uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi müdahalesine tepkileri

Khaled ve Eren'in hikayelerinin okunması ve biri mülteci, diğeri ev sahibi topluluğa mensup iki çocuğun hikayelerindeki empati ve diğer pro-sosyal davranışların ele alınması başta olmak üzere uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi müdahalesinin, mülteci çocuklar ile ev sahibi topluluğa mensup çocuklar arasında sınıf içinde gruplar arası arkadaşlığı geliştirmesi beklenmiştir. Ancak çocukların arkadaşlık biçimlerinin bu çalışma süresince değişmediği, her iki grup açısından da grup içi arkadaşlığın baskın olmaya devam ettiği görülmüştür. Ayrıca, çocukların hikayelerde bahsi geçen kahramanların grup kimliklerine pek dikkat etmedikleri anlaşılmıştır. Çok az sayıda çocuk, sürecin sonunda hikayelerin spesifik kısımlarını hatırlamıştır. Çocuklar açısından müdahalenin en beğenilen kısmı, ikinci kitapta kendilerinin ve akranlarının çizimlerini görmek olmuştur. Bu durum çocukların temsil edildiğini, bir şeyler başardığını ve seslerinin duyulduğunu hissetmesini sağlamıştır.

Aboud (2003) tarafından açıklandığı üzere okul öncesi çağda bulunan çocuklara, aynı anda birden fazla baskın özelliğe dikkat etmek genellikle zor gelebilmektedir. Bu çalışmada yer alan çocuklar, öncelikle Khaled ve Eren'in resimlerindeki boy farkına dikkat ederken, bazı çocuklar Suriyeli ve Türk kimliklerinden ziyade aralarında yaş farkı olduğuna dair yorumlarda bulunmuştur. Bu doğrultuda, hikâye kahramanlarının grup kimlikleri, çocuklar açısından dikkat çekici olmamış, dolayısıyla grup dışındaki kişiler ile dolaylı irtibat sonucu grup dışı tavır ve davranışların daha olumlu olmasıyla birlikte görülmesi beklenen fayda, bu çalışmada çocuklar açısından diğer çalışmalarda (Cameron ve ark., 2006) olduğu gibi ortaya çıkmamıştır. Ayrıca uygulamanın, ilgili dönem içerisinde daha erken bir tarihte yapılabilmiş olsaydı bu çalışmada yer alan çocuklar arasında arkadaşlık biçimlerinde veya gruplar arası ilişkilerde değişim yaratma ihtimalinin daha fazla olacağı düşünülmektedir. Wang vd. (2019) okul öncesi çağdaki çocuklar arası arkadaşlıkların, eğitim-öğretim yılı içerisinde istikrar kazanıp net hale geldiğini tespit ederken, Ladd (1990) çocukların küçük yaşlarda kurduğu arkadaşlıkların nispeten geçici olduğu sonucuna varmıştır. Son olarak, bu çalışma bağlamında zaman kısıtlaması nedeniyle mümkün olmasa da daha fazla hikâye ile daha uzun süre uygulamanın, daha çok fayda sağlayabileceği düşünülmektedir. Örneğin, üç kitaptan yararlanarak 6 hafta boyunca haftalık okuma saatleri ile mülteci

eğitimi bağlamında benzer müdahaleler uygulayan Cameron vd. (2006; 2011) ve Tercan vd. (2021), müdahale çalışmasından sonraki haftalarda grup dışı tavırların daha olumlu olmaya başladığını tespit etmiştir.

Uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi müdahalesi, sınıfta bulunan çocukların yaklaşık yarısının ailesini sürece dahil ederken ev sahibi ve mülteci topluluğa mensup katılımcıların katılım oranı aşağı yukarı eşit olmuştur. Aileler, uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi uygulamasına olumlu tepki vermişlerdir. Bu durum, hikâye kahramanlarının gruplar arası arkadaşlık söylemini genişletmiş ancak aileler, çocuklarının okul yaşantısı ile ilgili endişelerini dile getirmek üzere katılım gösterip gruplar arası ilişkilere yönelik dileklerini paylaşmıştır. Bu ailelerden bazıları, bu müdahale sonucunda kendilerini güçlenmiş hissettiklerini paylaşmıştır.

Aile Katılımı Ekolojileri (EKE) kuramsal çerçevesi'nin (Calabrese Barton vd., 2004) tavsiye ettiği üzere, uygulamaya katılmayan ailelerin evdeki durumları dikkate alındığında katılım göstermeyen neredeyse tüm ailelerin, hastalıkla uğraştığı veya evde küçük çocuğuna baktığı ve başka faaliyetlere ayıracak beşerî sermayesinin az olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Müdahaleye katılan aileler, ikinci kitabın hazırlanması sürecini gruplar arası iletişim ile ilgili endişelerini ve isteklerini dile getirme fırsatı olarak değerlendirmiştir. Her iki topluluğa mensup aileler, çocukların okuldaki psikososyal iyilik halini önemli bulurken ev sahibi topluluğa mensup aileler, akademik başarının da altını çizmiştir. Her iki topluluğa mensup aileler de, çocukların okul dışı arkadaşlıklarını kolaylaştırma anlamında ailelerin etkili bir rol oynadıkları düşünmektedir. Her iki topluluğa mensup aileler, bilgi ve deneyimlerinden yararlanarak ikinci kitap için ilettikleri girdiler üzerinden gruplar arası ilişkilere etki etmek istediklerini dile getirmiştir. Bu durum, Meksikalı-Amerikalı ailelerin kültürlerine yerleşmiş ipuçlarını çocuklarına aktarma pratiklerini hatırlatmakta olup (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Lopez, 2001) ailelerin sahip olduğu "bilgi kaynaklarının" kanıtı niteliğindedir ve bu durum dönüşümsel değişim açısından kilit öneme sahip olabilir (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

Çalışmanın başında hem öğretmen hem de okul müdürü; mülteci çocuklar ve aileleri ile iletişim kurma konusunda güçlüklerle karşılaştıklarına ve iki topluluğa mensup

çocuklar arasında daha olumlu ve sık etkileşimin önündeki ana engelin dil farklılıkları olduğuna vurgu yapmıştır. Uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi müdahalesinin işbirlikçi ve yaratıcı mahiyetini takdirle karşılamış ve uygulama sayesinde kendi bakış açılarının değiştiğini belirtmişlerdir. Görüşülen öğretmen, kültürel açıdan karma bir anasınıfını yönetme konusunda uygulamanın kendisine daha fazla güven kazandırıp fikir verdiğini ifade ederken, okul müdürü ise anasınıfına giden mülteci çocukların Türkçe öğrenmelerini destekleme açısından okulun oynayabileceği rolün farkına varmıştır. Eğitimciler, uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi müdahalesinin sosyal uyumu artırabilme yolları ile ilgili görüşlerini paylaşmış ve bu uygulamanın tekrarı ve kendi okulları dışında Türkiye genelinde yaygınlaştırılması için destek ve görüşlerini dile getirmiştir.

Eğitimcilerin, ev sahibi ve mülteci topluluklar arası dil farkının neden olduğu öğrenme ve ilgili sorunlara yönelik deneyimlerine ve görüşlerine ilişkin olarak bu çalışmada ortaya çıkan birtakım bulgulara, mülteci eğitimi literatüründe yaygın bir şekilde rastlanmaktadır (Solak & Çelik, 2018; Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Şeker & Sirkeci, 2014). Bu çalışmada, eğitimcilerin sınıftaki dil çeşitliliğini gündeme getirmek üzere kendileri için yeni roller ve stratejiler tanımlaması, pragmatik eylem araştırmasının paydaşları daha etkili adım atmaya sevk etmesine yönelik faydasını ortaya koymuştur (Greenwood, 2007). Bulgular, aynı zamanda Kılınç (2019) tarafından belirlendiği üzere, Türkiye'de eğitim-öğretimde herkese uygun olması beklenen tek bir eğitim yaklaşımının benimsenmesinin yetersizliğini de göstermektedir. Bu durum aynı zamanda, Kılınç ve Karslı-Çalamak (2022) tarafından belirtildiği üzere Türkiye'de mülteci eğitimi ile ilgilenen eğitimciler açısından kapsayıcı eğitim, kültüre duyarlı pedagoji ile ikinci dil öğrenme ve kaynakları ile ilgili eğitim fırsatlarının yeteriz olabildiğine işaret etmektedir.

Uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi müdahalesinin tekrarlanmasına yönelik uygulama odaklı hususlar

İlk olarak, müdahalenin eğitim-öğretim yılının son ayında gerçekleştirilmesi ve kısa sürmesi, potansiyel etkisini kısıtlamış olabilir. Söz konusu uygulamanın çocuklara sosyal etkileşimlerini yönetmelerini sağlayacak bir güç kazandırdığı tam olarak söylenemez. Çocuklara ve ailelerine söz konusu karakterlere yönelik öngördükleri

tavır ve davranışları değerlendirmek, tasavvur etmek ve uygulamak için yeterli zamanın da bu müdahale programı ile tanınmadığı düşünülmektedir. İkinci olarak çocukların, ikinci kitapta kendi çizimlerini görmelerinin ve kitapta çok sayıda karakter olmasının sevinci ve heyecanı ile dikkatlerinin dağıldığı gözlenmiştir. Müdahalenin, daha yavaş ve daha modüler bir şekilde uygulanması durumunda mevcut durumdan daha fazla yarar sağlanabileceği düşünülmektedir. Üçüncü olarak pek çok aile kitap okuyacak, ikinci kitap için girdi gönderecek veya görüşme için okula gelecek zamanları olmadığını dile getirmiştir. Buna karşın diğer aileleri, tüm bunları yerine getirip araştırmacıya ek notlar dâhi iletmiştir. Bu durum, müdahale sırasında ailelerin sahip olduğu veya harekete geçirdiği sermaye düzeylerinin farklı olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Dördüncü olarak çocukların, kendilerini karakterler ile ille de beklendiği şekillerde özdeşleştirmediği görülmüştür. Grup kimliklerinden ziyade kendi kişisel özellikleri, kendilerini algılama biçimleri ve deneyimleri, tanımlama yapma açısından daha önemli faktörler olmuştur. Bu durum, daha çok etki oluşturulması açısından kitaplarda karakter oluşturma sürecinde göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Ayrıca kitabın iki dilli olması, katılımcılar tarafından iyi ve takdirle karşılanmış olsa da Arapçanın yazılı/resmi halinin, mülteci aileler için zorluk yarattığı ve bunları çocukları için günlük konuşulan/gayri resmi Arapçaya tercüme etmek zorunda kaldıkları görülmüştür. Son olarak okul müdürü, uygulamanın yaygınlaştırılması ve her okula uygulama için bir gönüllü desteğinin sağlanması gerektiğinin altını çizmiştir. Ülke genelinde anaokuluna gitme oranlarında beklenen artış ile birlikte ev sahibi ve mülteci topluluklara mensup daha fazla sayıda çocuk, birbiriyle anasınıfı ortamında karşılaşma ve söz konusu müdahaleden yararlanma imkanına sahip olacaktır.

SONUÇ

Çalışmanın Sonuçları

Çocuklar arası dil farkı, gruplar arası oyun ve arkadaşlık bakımından uygulamaya dönük zorluklar yaratmakta olup öncelikle bu konunun ele alınması gerekmektedir. Bu eksikliğin giderilmesi için okul tarafından anaokuluna başlamadan önceki yaz, mülteci

çocuklara yönelik oyun temelli Türkçe dersler düzenlenebilir. Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı (AÇEV) tarafından geliştirilen Yaz Anaokulu uygulamasının, mülteci çocukların Türkçe algılama ve kendilerini ifade etme becerilerini geliştirdiği tespit edilmiştir (Erdemir, 2022). Anaokulu vasıtasıyla çocuklar dil açısından desteklendiğinde, uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi uygulamasının, çocukların gruplar arası ilişkilerini geliştirmesi beklenebilir. Müdahalenin, çocuklar grup içi oyun alışkanlıklarını belirlemeden önce, eğitim-öğretim yılının en başından itibaren daha uzun süre uygulanması ve tüm dönem boyunca sürdürülmesi tavsiye edilmektedir. Söz konusu müdahale, ev sahibi topluluğa mensup aileler ile mülteci aileler arasında okulda doğrudan irtibat kurmaya yönelik fırsatlar oluşturarak daha da geliştirilebilir. Gruplar arası etkileşime olumlu bakan örnek aileler, gruplar arası ilişkilerin geliştirilmesine destek olmak ve gruplar arası faaliyetler ile gezilerin düzenlenmesini sağlamak amacıyla okul tarafından tespit edilip sürece katılabilirler. Son olarak, ev sahibi topluluğa mensup ailelerin çocuklarının akademik başarısı ile ilgili endişeleri de mülteci yoğunluğu olan bağlamlarda eğitimin kalitesini arttırmaya yönelik alınacak önlemlerle giderilmelidir.

Çalışmanın Sınırlılıkları

Öncelikle araştırmacının yabancı olması ve çalışmaya hem mülteci hem de ev sahibi topluluğa mensup kişilerin dahil edilmesi, çalışmayı karmaşık ve çok dilli hale getirmiştir. Bütçenin sınırlı olması nedeniyle çalışma süresince gereken çeviri ve tercüme hizmetleri için Ankara'da bulunan Türk, Suriyeli ve Afgan üniversite öğrencileri ile çalışılmış olup bu öğrencilerden sadece biri, tercüme alanında örgün eğitim görmüştür. Bu sebeple, bu çalışmada katılımcıların bakış açılarının tamamının yansıtılamamış olması mümkündür. İkinci olarak aileler ile okulda görüşülmesi, çoğunun okula düzenli olarak gelmemesi sebebiyle zor olmuştur. Bu durum, ailelerin deneyimlerinin ve düşüncelerinin derinlemesine incelenmesinden taviz verilmesine sebep olmuş ve ailelerin sürece katılımının güçlendirici yönlerinin ortaya çıkmasını engellemiştir. Son olarak uyarlanmış bibliyoterapi uygulamasında yararlanılan araç ve süreçler, bu çalışmada yer alan çocuk katılımcılara tam mânâsıyla uygun olmadığı fark edilmiştir. Çizimli olsa da geliştirilen kitapların her sayfasında, beş yaşındaki çocukların dikkatini veremeyeceği kadar çok içerik ve detaya yer verilmiştir. Bu

kitapların birden çok oturumda daha basit hallerinin okunması daha etkili olacaktır. Söz konusu kitaplar ve süreç, çocukların bu tür ihtiyaçlarını karşılayacak şekilde uyarlanabilir.

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): THE POTENTIAL OF A PUBLIC PRESCHOOL INTERVENTION
TO PROMOTE GREATER SOCIAL COHESION BETWEEN THE REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN TÜRKIYE

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