

Refugees' Employment and Adaptability of their Occupation

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Abstract

This study aims to explore refugees' employment issues considering diverse societies in the world including Syrians in Austria and Turkey. Also, a comprehensive literature review has been done to be able to present diverse dimensions of this controversial and current matter by examining different kinds of articles and research papers. Turkey has been chosen for this paper because it shares borders with countries where refugees come; furthermore, it has significant immigrant populations in its many provinces. The percentage of refugees who have moved has reached its peak in recent years. Finding work, managing the workplace, career adaptability in the beginning process as well as having a just workforce in comparison to salary are just a few of the difficulties refugees must overcome in their attempt to integrate effectively into society. When choosing occupation different factors are involved, and it has a great influence on human beings' lives. In this respect, I assume that this process is much more difficult and complicated for immigrants who have started a new life and has to adapt to a new society.

Keywords: *Refugee; Adaptability of occupation; Employment; Career seeking; Occupation; Labor force*

1. Introduction

While the world's current situation is analyzed, it would be seen that the refugee problem has been increasing in the last decade due to wars, and economic crises vs. Especially after World War II, a large labor transition had happened from the least developed regions to the most developed regions, and this migration usually happened from rural to urban areas. It is inevitable that many countries have experienced regular or irregular migration issues because the world is going into a more global perspective. "Furthermore, there is an important point learned from all countries that have faced immigration over the years, that integration is not one-way. As the host country changes the immigrants who settled on its borders and adapts it with its own culture, immigrants from different cultures can contribute to the country they want to settle and develop that country in various ways from different perspectives" [1].

The refugee matter has become a problem that we face a lot today. It is an issue that civilians in Turkey are particularly interested in because the number of refugees has increased significantly in the last 10 years and whether they are employed or not is a question encountered by the local people. In addition, we can talk about the existence of a large population immigrating from Turkey to Germany since the 1960s. Individuals who did not return to their own country after going to Germany evaluated the job opportunities there.

2. Employment of Refugees

The motivation of working in a job provides individuals with economic freedom, as well as making life more meaningful and purposeful. While refugees are asked to identify the importance of a job in their new resettlement, they are more likely to make a relation of their self-definition, self-identity, and job satisfaction. While one of the participants in the study of Wehrle et al. [2] stated that work is a very important element of his life, he indicated that working does not only have an effect on him financially. He even mentioned the psychological effects of the problem of being unemployed after emigrating, saying that it caused serious insecurity in his character [2].

“The MPG (Migration Policy Group) Refugee Integration Tool states that employment is an important part of the integration process of refugees into the new society. In addition, the concept of employment, which makes the contribution of refugees to the host society more meaningful, plays an important role at the center of this adaptation process. Also, MPG determined several aspects of the effective integration/assimilation condition including.

- legal employment and self-employment,
- right to recognition of formal degrees and right to skills validation for refugees
- recognition and support of foreign diplomas, certificates, and other evidence of formal qualifications
- mechanisms to mainstream the integration of refugees into employment policies
- coordination with regional and local authorities on employment for beneficiaries of international protection” [1].

While it was easier to immigrate to a different country for job opportunities due to the need for a workforce in the past, there are some limitations and restrictions in today's modern life. In the 1960s, countries with a “guest worker understanding” were also restricted due to the fulfillment of the need and a different practice from the tolerance policy was followed [3].

As indicated in article 17 of the 1951 Refugee Convention “The Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the most favorable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign country in the same circumstances, as regards the right to engage in wage-earning employment” [1]. Also, in the same article, there is another significant item that protects refugees’ employment rights which is “The Contracting States shall give sympathetic consideration to assimilating the rights of all refugees with regard to wage-earning employment to those of nationals, and in particular of those refugees who have entered their territory pursuant to programs of labor recruitment or under immigration schemes” [1].

On the other hand, it is inevitable for refugees to come across a below job opportunity that is at a lower level than their skills and abilities. Although there is a difference among different refugee groups who are from different countries, the condition doesn’t differ quite much. In the sample of Sweden, As in European countries, most immigrants there have a lower employment rate than local people. The reasons behind the weaker labor market integration of refugees especially at the national level are

several including low funds of people, rapid economic transformations or change of institutional conditions. Also, the reason behind the offering of unequal opportunities to different immigrant groups can be explained by the degree of discrimination. To have a clearer understanding some researches were done in Sweden by Bevelander & Lundh [3] which demonstrates the lower employment of refugees. According to these examples in Sweden, in a group of male participants, 71% of Bosnian workers have an occupation, while only 39% of Iraqi workers could get into a job, which is a much lower rate. Another dramatic injustice is that people of the same nationality are attached to the gender barrier. While the percentage of Bosnian women being hired is 65, Iraqi women have a rate of 29%, less than half [3].

Also, according to a study that examines job opportunities of people who were forced to migrate due to war and conflict due to the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia indicates that after resettling, refugees are more likely to remain unemployed, lose their jobs, and work informally [4].

In addition to the spread of immigrant groups to different parts of the world, it would be more accurate to say that people from the same nationality are coming together and gathering in the same country or region because they seek similar job opportunities and have common occupational goals [3].

While several studies conducted in 2017 in Australia indicate that efforts to provide basic services such as food, shelter, or language training to refugees in Austria have been partially successful, on the other hand, it is painfully clear that refugees are hardly integrated into the labor market and have suffered from unemployment [5].

3. Career Adaptability of Refugees

A new start for a person that left her old life behind and aims to establish an organization of daily life means completely challenging. Therefore, the possibilities s/he has are more limited and the adaptation process is very intense and complicated. Due to the concept of refugee, which has been talked about more recently, the content of the notion of career adjustment has begun to be filled. Career adaptation refers to the factors that are effective in the new career that a person will choose after settling in a new country or in the process of adaptation. Career adaptability is defined as “the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions” [6]. In other words career adaptability may be mentioned as “the ability of an individual to navigate career transitions” [7].

“In addition to the adaptation process, there are structural and personal obstacles as well as hardships of providing social networks and gaining adequate psychological conditions. Also, other key theoretical frames which have been formed by career adaptability are objective resettlement success and subjective success (e.g., mental health and life satisfaction). Objective resettlement success is also known as occupational mobility, and has many components in it, such as knowing the native language of the host country and increasing opportunities and payments accordingly” [6].

While both objective and subjective resettlement success has a great impact on career adaptability on an individual, their including components differ from each other quite much. It is indicated that subjective factors’ influence can be improved or

worsened by individualistic attempts. Moreover, objective factors provide an economic and financial perspective, while subjective ones mostly include elements such as job satisfaction or working without threat [6].

Career adaptability is a psychosocial process that explains immigrants' self-regulation during a job search. A refugee with high career adaptability evaluates environmental factors, plans, makes decisions, and manages this process more logically than others in order to achieve the goal of obtaining a job or finding a matching job related to his/her previous job. Of course, I foresee that this process will be difficult and sometimes longer depending on the situation, and I assume that refugees as all human beings are likely to seek social ties to provide a sense of belonging and life satisfaction during this process. However, Campion [6] indicates that using these newly formed strong ties for employment results in lower objective resettlement success [6].

In a sample study, refugee groups in Greece and the Netherlands were used. It is found that individuals with higher psychological capital from these groups naturally have an increased career adaptability and are more confident in looking for a job in their host country. In that research, Newman et al. [4] have indicated that in the field of occupational transition, the career construction model of adaptation and importance of career adaptability resources are determined as crucial points of self-regulatory strengths of individuals [4].

4. Career Guidance for Refugee Students and Adolescent

Since we talk about and make argumentations about the employment of refugees, it should be considered that counseling refugee kids from the school environment will lead them to gain a more professional perspective. In that manner, while the ministries of national education should be involved in the event, an important part depends on the direction and guidance of school counselors. School counselors take part in the university preparation processes of adolescent immigrant students by dealing with complex variables that promote career development or create barriers for students. It will be very significant in their future lives to guide the young and child population who have just adapted to a new society and to manage their career choices [8].

Career development strategies give directions to counselors who work in multinational and cosmopolitan school environments. These strategies are diverse from a society to immigrant groups. Mainly, facilitating a comprehensive school counseling program that can be implemented to different conditions and seeking personal/social, career, and academic growth are two basic dimensions. Furthermore, the cornerstones of this subject are beneficial guidance on managing the post-graduation process and creating a reliable environment to consult in their business decisions. It should be taken into account that there will be cultural differences in a career development process specially prepared for migrant students.

For example, these strategies cannot be expected to be effective if they are not structured and planned as appropriate for the youth population's needs. In addition, the establishment of a social network that will guide immigrant students in their career planning processes and contribute to their socialization in society, which they are just trying to get used to, motivates students [8].

5. Integration of Refugees in Turkey in terms of Occupational Qualification

I would like to emphasize that while the recruitment and adaptation processes of immigrants all over the world is a problematic and controversial process that has been going on for years, Turkey should have a special policy and it is an issue that should be emphasized more in our country because it is the country that receives the most crowded population of immigrants in the world. The importance of this topic can be better understood when it is taken into account that most of the 3 million 600 thousand immigrants who are currently in Turkey and officially stated at the moment are not able to return to the country; however, this number is actually much higher than official reports due to illegal passage.

Although they reside in provinces close to the border such as Kahramanmaraş, Malatya and Adıyaman due to geographical proximity, they later dispersed to metropolitan cities such as Adana, Mersin, İzmir, Bursa, İstanbul and Konya. However, a serious irregular distribution in some cities such as Kilis caused these cities to receive as much immigration as their own population. Considering these rates and demographic distribution, apart from the employment of immigrants, in the next period in Turkey, the debates on harmony, mutual exchange, rights and law will not cease and will continue [9].

Moreover, while refugees' nationality varies, it is clear that Syrians' population is indicated as the most crowded nation; also, from the beginning of the civil war until nowadays especially the number of Syrian refugees has increased. Due to war and its psychological effects, refugees are traumatized by this long situation [10]. In the last decade, most of the refugees who have immigrated from Syria, which shares a long border with Turkey, want to live with their acquaintances or relatives in Turkey who have settled before. Furthermore, some dramatic current problems are the big increase of house cost and rent prices due to immigrants seeking to settle in towns and cities, as well as the great concern for employment of local people who complain about the incoming refugees being strayed. The extension in the immigrant groups who did not want to live in the camps and dispersed to different cities of the country caused some problems.

For this reason, most of the Syrian migrant groups living outside the camps have a hard time adjusting to their new life and are faced with inadequate living conditions. In addition, the issue of unregistered employment, which has gone beyond state control, causes workers working under extractive conditions in the economy to work for extremely low wages. According to some recorded data, only 4,019 Syrian refugees were granted work permits in 2015, and as of July, only 5,500 Syrian refugees were granted work permits in 2016. When these data are evaluated, it can be concluded that the work permit regulation has little effect on the access of Syrian refugees to the labor market. Despite all this negative and uncontrolled workforce, there are some immigrants who use their skills in a beneficial way and have suitable job opportunities for them. For example, some of them settled in cities and started businesses in Turkey, helping to revive the economy. In addition, wealthy business people investing their capital in Turkey is another example that contributes to the Turkish economy [1].

According to a study investigating job opportunities in Turkey for immigrants from Syria, if immigrants are divided into 3 main groups depending on their previous economic situation, it has been found that middle-class citizens have the most difficulty in finding a new occupation. While it can be estimated to say that people in the lower, poor, and wage-class categories find jobs in areas such as construction and textiles, despite processes and practices involving labor exploitation, immigrants in the upper classes also have a commercial advantage. Those who stated that they belonged to the middle class due to relocation have experienced a class decline and their status was revoked. (Middle class refers to people who were well-educated, worked

in the state bureaucracy or the private sector with a certain salary and had a profession in their previous lives.) Many examples of this situation can be found in daily life in Turkey. For example, a Syrian, lawyer, doctor, academician, teacher, or artist, had to experience a rapid and abrupt break from the society s/he knew and held a position in the context of social relations. The situation of working in a job lower than their abilities and capacities caused by this problem seriously affects the adaptation of these people to their new jobs [9].

6. Conclusion

As a consequence of many combinations of the research and findings, it is inevitable to ignore refugees' related issues going on in different parts of the world. Also, as mentioned there are some common and controversial problems that involve refugees' employment and their adaptation process in a host country. Refugees often encounter difficulties and barriers in the host country's labor market that undermine and diminish their local employability. Thus, this disadvantageous condition leads to unemployment, underemployment and poor integration into the host country's work and society [2].

What refugees experience in the process of resettlement and labor integration can be grouped under a few main headings, such as temporary uncertainty, instability, and lack of control, as well as being compatible with difficult conditions. As refugee workforce integration is a complex and protracted process, more attention should be paid to the dimensions of the time and place that refugees are in when addressing this sensitive issue [11]. Finding a stable job contributes to the personal and economic well-being of refugees, but also to social peace as it ensures long-term integration with migrants into the new society they join. Because at the societal level, high refugee unemployment threatens social stability and also deprives the national economy of any human capital that can contribute [5].

To conclude, forced displacement caused by war, conflict, political events, persecution, national or man-made disasters and environmental degradation will continue to be one of humanity's problems as long as the factors on which migrations depend. The issue of whether refugees can find work is a major theme that every country must address, as it involves different dimensions and issues such as their successful resettlement and integration into their new communities [12].

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