

Beyond the Social Distance and Cultural Similarities: Turkish Citizens and Syrians in Şanlıurfa

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Abstract

In Şanlıurfa, Syrians and residents have a historical background and cultural similarities such as language and kinship. Nevertheless, the number of Syrian migrants is very high in the city and residents are distant to Syrians. Şanlıurfa case study aims to analyze the variation in social distance of residents toward Syrian migrants. This study argues that the number of migrants in a country (or in a neighborhood) is more important than cultural similarities when explaining social cohesion. In addition, based on multiple regression analysis, the study suggests that under such circumstance, there are mainly three determinants to explain variation in social distance, which are related to the perception and/or beliefs of Şanlıurfa residents, such as perceived crime and social disorder; their beliefs about Syrian migrants' personalities; and their linguistic (in)tolerance increase in criminality (perceived crime) and erosion in identity (and maybe norms, that is social disorder)).

Keywords: Social Distance; Syrians; Şanlıurfa; Forced Migration; Social Cohesion

Introduction

In March 2011, Syrians started to migrate to Turkey for running from the violent armed conflict in Syria. As violence escalated, the number of Syrians in Turkey have increased dramatically since 29 April 2011. In 2021, it became around 3.7 million (3.670.069, Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM)-Temporary Protection Statistics, 2021). With 525.123, Istanbul is hosting the largest number of Syrian migrants in Turkey. Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa follow Istanbul respectively. While in Istanbul, Syrian migrants are only 3.5 per cent of the whole population; it is 21.5 per cent in Gaziantep, 26.36 per cent in Hatay and 20.1 per cent in Şanlıurfa (DGMM-Temporary Protection Statistics, 2021). Thus, Syrian population density have been very high in Gaziantep, Hatay and Şanlıurfa.

As the number of Syrian migrants under temporary protection¹ living in Turkey increases, several studies focus on Syrian migrants' lives host countries discussing “a variety of subjects, such as political discourse towards Syrians, their social rights, integration problems, and gender issues.” (Unutulmaz, O., Sirkeci, I. and Eroğlu Utku, D., 2017:3) Besides, Turkish

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citizens started to have several concerns, complaints as well as anxieties about them. A serious tension or conflict has not ever been experienced in the country as of 2021; and a level of social harmony is still very high in Turkey. Nevertheless, as Syrian Barometer 2019 show, Turkish public are distant to Syrians (72). According to Syrian Barometer 2017, the overall social distance scores of Turkish citizens toward Syrian migrants were -0,36 while it became -0,51 in Syrian Barometer 2019 (72).

Studies focusing on the cross-cultural adaptation and its determinants generally suggest that similarity between host and home cultures is important for harmony (S. Liu et. All. 213). Thus, cultural similarity is expected to play a positive role for adaptation or social acceptance. Syrians and residents especially in Şanlıurfa have cultural similarities (such as religious (sects) similarities and even language). For instance, residents in Şanlıurfa and Syrian migrants have had a common historical background. Şanlıurfa population consists of Turkish citizens with Turkish, Kurdish and Arab mother tongue. Both Şanlıurfa and several provinces (such as Raqqa, Aleppo) in Syria were under Ottoman rule. Urfa (Ruha) and Raqqa were state (eyalet) of Ottoman Empire. Syrians and Şanlıurfa residents have had “historical relations, collective memory, kinship and tribal ties, faith and cultural resemblance” (İnce, 2019: 563).

Although Şanlıurfa is one of the most significant cities in Turkey, where cultural similarities are very high between Syrians and residents; unlike it is expected, Şanlıurfa Barometer 2018 shows that even in Şanlıurfa, residents are distant to Syrians (overall -0,59, 61). This study argues that population size and density of the existing migrants in a country or in a neighbourhood is very noteworthy. Thus, the number of Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa is more important than their cultural similarities with the residents. Cultural similarities are meaningful where the number of r migrants is low in a country; and anxieties among the residents related to, for instance, loss of identity or unemployment might not exist or ineffective. However, when the number of migrants is high, then the effect of cultural similarities would diminish, and social cohesion would be damaged because of social distance related to anxieties and concerns (Erdoğan, 2020: 76). As Şanlıurfa Barometer 2018 shows, residents are distant to Syrian migrants and this study aims to analyse the main basis of social distance seen in Şanlıurfa: What is the basis of Turkish citizens’ social distance toward high number of Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa?

A peaceful society cannot exist without social cohesion. For a peaceful society, social cohesion is important and a distant society with individuals avoiding each other would hinder social cohesion. For this reason, it is very crucial to discuss and analyse the reasons behind the unwillingness of residents to interact with Syrian migrants in the city, where it would be expected otherwise. This study uses Şanlıurfa Barometer 2018 data, and it is assumed that there is a close and direct relationship between Turkish citizens’ social distance (willingness of them to interact with) toward Syrian migrants and several factors that can be categorized as perceived crime and social disorder, beliefs about Syrian migrants’ personalities, and linguistic tolerance. Several concepts such as securitization, integration and social cohesion are not associated with migrants (Erdoğan, 2020: 78; and Özçürümez and İçduygu, 2020).ⁱⁱ Many studies have suggested that Turkish government needs to improve “a long-term and integrated policy regarding Syrians in Turkey (Akar and Erdoğan, 2019; Çağaptay and Menekşe, 2014; İçduygu and Şimşek, 2016)” (in Chang, 2021:2). The results and suggestions of this study can help policy-makers to improve a long-term policy related to social cohesion regarding Syrians in Turkey.



Theoretical Framework

As integration, social cohesion involves both adaptation of immigrants and minorities, as well as reactions and changes in the host society at large. As an example, the Council of Europe and several member states agreed to promote the integration of immigrants and positive community relations “by adopting legislative and other policy measures in all areas of society” (Niessen, 2001: 29). Community relations is about “the whole range of challenges and opportunities resulting from the interaction between nationals and newcomers and between majority and minority groups” (Niessen, 2001: 29). Social cohesion is an important concept that includes interaction, and it is very prevalent discussion in the literature while being “a largely ill-defined term (Jenson, 1998; Jeannotte, 2000; Osberg, 2003) whose exact content varies from one author to another” (Chan et. all, 2006: 274).

The concepts such as belonging, trust, security, social order, and tolerance are combined with theoretical and political conceptions of social cohesion in western societies in general (Green et. all., 2003: 458). For instance, according to Jenson, the concept of social cohesion has been used by several scholars to “demonstrate an analytical proclivity for seeing social order as the consequence of values more than interests, of consensus more than conflict and of social practices more than political action (Jenson, 1998: 38)” In general, it can be defined as “shared values and commitment to a community” (Jenson, 1998: 13). Main aspects of the concept are “the strength of social relations, networks and associations; a sense of belonging to the same community and the ties that bind, in terms of shared values, a common identity and trust among members; equal opportunities; the extent of disparities, social cleavages and social exclusion in a society.” (Berger-Schmitt, 2002: 406)

This study argues that social threat (like social cleavages) and social distance (or strength of social relations) are some of the indicators of social cohesion (de Berry and Roberts, 2018: 5 and 6). Securitization is also related to migration and social cohesion: International migrants and/or migrants can be “reconstructed as an ‘existential threat’ for the state and society” (Erdoğan, 2020: 77), followed by processes of “‘ghettoization’ and ‘diaspora’”ⁱⁱⁱ (Erdoğan, 2020: 74). This study focuses mainly on strength of social relations, which is about being willing to have some level of relationship with “others.” The reason is that, although Turkish national security is threatened by developments in Syria (Kirişçi, 2017) and high number of Syrians have moved to Turkey; for instance, approving mixed marriages between the members of groups in a society (in this case, Syrians and Turkish citizens) could provide not seeing “others” as existential threat for the state and society as a whole; and could reduce “the probability of violent conflicts among those groups.” It could also increase the social cohesion of that society (such as Merton 1941; Blau and Schwartz 1984; Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits 2002; Monden and Smits 2005, in Smits, 2010: 418). Approving mixed marriages between the members of groups in a society could show both having shared values and openness to “others” values as a step to social cohesion.

To measure the strength of social relations or social distance, the study adapts Emory Bogardus’ social distance scale, which is about “feelings of unwillingness among members of a group to accept or approve a given degree of intimacy in interaction with a member of an outgroup” (Williams, 1964, p. 29, from Koc and Anderson, 2018). He explains Social Distance as “the grades and degrees of understanding and intimacy which characterize pre-social and social relations generally” (1925: 216). With this scale, it is aimed to measure “the perceived intimacy or distance of an individual’s relationships with various others.” (Liu et. All, 2015:

xvi) It can help to understand “the degree of the likes and dislikes of a person in his economic relationships of life, political relationships, religious relationships, as well as in the racial and cultural...” (Bogardus, 1947: 309) For this reason, it includes questions such as “Would you marry someone who is Chinese?” and ‘Would you have Chinese people as regular friends or as speaking acquaintances?’” (Bogardus, 1933, in Liu et. All, 2015: xvi).

To create social distance scale, Bogardus prepares a study including “a list of 60 single sentence descriptions, nearly all of which were heard in ordinary conversations where a person was expressing himself about other persons” (1933: 265). The statements (such as “would marry...”) are about various types of social relationships and related to “contacts within the family, within social or fraternal groups, within neighbourhoods, within churches, within schools, within play groups, within transportation groups, within occupational and business groups, within political or national groups” (1933: 265). As a result of his study, he selects “seven nearly equidistant social distance situations” or seven statements such as “would marry, would have as regular friends, would work beside in an office” (1933: 268-269).

This study adapts Bogardus’ Social Distance Scale including several statements about social relations and aims to analyse the main basis of Turkish citizens’ social distance toward high number of Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. In the literature, for example one of the main aims of Triandis and Triandis in 1960 is to study “the extent to which the relative importance of race, religion, nationality, and social class, as determinants of social distance, is dependent upon the subject’s own background with respect to these factors” (110). As another example, Hipp aims to find out whether “perceived crime and disorder impact social distance between new and prior residents” (Hipp, 2020, p. 2), since local crime rates (perceived or real) are generally attributed to migrants and asylum seekers (e.g., Alkouzaa, 2018; McDonald, 2017, in Hynie, 2018: 268). As another example, Koç and Anderson find out that intergroup anxiety is an important determinant of social distance: “Participants’ projected feelings toward how they might feel while interacting with a migrant predicted their likelihood to avoid them.” (Koç and Anderson, 2018: 797) Aside from such determinants, like “fears over the cultural erosion of the white French Quebecois majority persist in Quebec and have been used by political parties to garner public support for discriminatory proposed legislations” (Bakali, 2015: 427), fears over cultural (and identity, norms and social disorder) erosion and presence of parallel societies (integration problems, or ‘non-integrated’ immigrants refusing ‘western values’ (Ramm, 2010: 187)) could affect social distance of residents.

As Allport’s theory states, “under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members.” (Allport’s contact hypothesis) Thus, if individuals could have opportunity to meet and contact with others in various ways, then they could have better understanding to each other (different groups, minorities, migrants) about their way of life, belief, ideas and culture. However, unlike it is expected, Şanlıurfa Barometer 2018 shows that residents in the city are distant to Syrians: Although cultural similarities among Syrian migrants and the residents in Şanlıurfa are high and they have communicated with each other; the number of migrants is high so that residents are distant to them. Nevertheless, it is very important to understand the main basis behind their distance. With this aim, this case study uses Şanlıurfa Barometer 2018 data and analyses the determinants of Turkish citizens’ social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. It adapts Bogardus’ Social Distance Scale and explains social distance as “feelings of unwillingness among members of a group to accept or approve a given degree of intimacy in



interaction with a member of an outgroup” (Williams, 1964, p. 29, from Koc and Anderson, 2018). Similar to Hipp’s study, this study assumes that there is a close and direct relationship between Turkish citizens’ social distance toward Syrians and “perceived crime and disorder” (Hipp, 2020: 2). Stephan’s integrated threat theory (ITT) aims to explain feelings of threat. According to his theory, “prejudice and negative attitudes towards immigrants and out-groups is explained by four types of threats: realistic threat, symbolic threat, negative stereotype, and intergroup anxiety.” (Croucher, 2017) Similarly, it is assumed that beliefs about Syrians’ personalities, and linguistic tolerance affects residents’ social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa.

The Method and Details from the Şanlıurfa Barometer 2018

In December 2018, the number of Syrians under Temporary Protection in Şanlıurfa (Syrian migrants) has reached to 455,789, which is very striking since it corresponds to almost a quarter of (22.92%) Şanlıurfa’s population. Şanlıurfa Barometer was designed to make an analysis of Syrian migrants’ situation in Şanlıurfa. The data is collected by... It was a comprehensive public opinion survey that includes district-based data on Şanlıurfa residents and Syrians living in Şanlıurfa. For the Barometer, face to face survey was conducted in the city in 2018, with 2220 Turkish Citizens (migrants).^{iv} The survey was conducted in several districts of the city, where most of the Syrian migrants (% 96.3) live.

For this study, specific questions were selected from the survey of Şanlıurfa Barometer 2018, and the answers to selected questions are recoded by eliminating “Don’t know” answers. Such recoding method might decrease the number of observations; however, it helps to have a stronger analysis. To test the normality of the data set, coefficient of skewness is calculated. According to the results, data set is normally distributed (in the range of -1.5 and +1.5). (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013)

For explaining Turkish citizens’ feelings about Syrians and their willingness to have social relations with Syrians in Şanlıurfa, the social distance scale (SDS) created by E.S.Bogardus was adopted and used in the Şanlıurfa Barometer. In this barometer, the social distance scale (SDS adopted from Bogardus) is presented in Question 12 (“Please indicate whether you agree with the statements I will read to reflect your feelings toward Syrians”). It includes 10 sub-dimensions such as marrying Syrians and approving living in the same apartment. Each of the dimensions is measured 5-point-Likert-type scale ranges from 1 (not at all agreed) to 3 (agreed) and 4-5 (Don’t Know and No Answer), which is recoded into three brackets by removing “Don’t know” and “No Answer” answers. For each answer, a score (from 1(not at all agreed) to 3 (agreed)) is assigned. In the end, scores would be summed up and participants can have at least 10 or at most 30 points.

The reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha is .895) indicates a high level of internal consistency for the variables with the specific sample: This means that it is possible to use the scale to measure Turkish citizens’ social distance toward Syrians in Şanlıurfa. Total mean score of the SDS is 13.45 ± 5.36 and the average mean score of SDS (observed) is calculated as $1.39 \pm .543$ out of 3 (the higher the scores the higher the willingness of participants to have interaction with Syrians in Şanlıurfa), showing that residents in Şanlıurfa are distant to Syrians.

It is hypothesized that Turkish residents’ social distance scores decline in relation to gender differences, economic aid tendencies, history of violence and naturalization attitudes. Lastly,

it is expected that issues related to criminality (perceived crime), erosion in identity (and maybe norms, that is related to social disorder), and presence of parallel societies (integration problems-related to social disorder) would cause Turkish residents to become socially distant from Syrian migrants.

Dependent and Independent Variables

The research question of this study is about the main basis of Turkish citizens' social distance toward high number of Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. With this aim, Turkish citizens' or residents' social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa is determined as the dependent variable. To operationalize it, the Question 12 is selected (Social Distance Scale with 10 sub-dimensions). The average mean score of SDS is used as a dependent variable.

The study includes several independent variables as possible predictors (main basis) of residents' social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. These are categorized as the crime and social disorder (the worries about living with Syrians, being harmed by Syrians), supporting them (financial aid or aid in kind), policy preferences about them (such as whether they should be sent back when the war is over), Syrians' return, Syrians' living place preferences, naturalization of Syrians,) beliefs about Syrian migrants' personalities (describing Syrians negative or positively), and linguistic tolerance (feelings about Arabic signboards).^v Most of them are recoded either by removing "Don't know" and "No Answer" answers or by turning them into dummy variables.

Besides these independent variables, focusing on demographics is important for the model. The selected demographics are gender, age, education, marital status and ethnic self-reports.

For the analysis, a chi-square test of independence is performed to examine gender differences in their approaches to Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa; and a multiple linear regression is used to predict and explain the determinants of residents' social distance toward high number of Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa.

Characteristics of Participants

The descriptive results show that participation rate in the survey is almost equal between men and women: Almost half of the sample are female participants (47.9 %) which is suitable for having a good representation of the community. In terms of age groups, the Table 1 shows that most of the sample are composed of young interviewees (in range of 18-45 ages).

Table 1. Age Categories

	Frequency	Percent
18-24	499	22.5
25-34	705	31.7
35-44	531	23.9
45-54	290	13.1
55- 64	129	5.8
65 and over	66	3.0
Total	2220	100.0



For analyzing cultural similarities between residents in Şanlıurfa and Syrian participants have been asked ethnic self-definition questions. The Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by ethnic self-definition. In terms of ethnic variation (self-defined), the percentage of Kurdish participants is higher than Arab and Turkish ones. Thus, most of the participants define themselves as Kurdish (60.2%). Still, almost one fourth of the participants see themselves as Arab. Thus, participants consist of Turkish citizens with Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab mother tongue.

Table 2. Ethnic differences (self-expressions)

	Frequency	Percent
Turkish	359	16.2
Kurd	1336	60.2
Arab	515	23.2
No answer	10	0.4
Total	2220	100.0

Despite of this language similarity, multiple response analysis shows that most of the respondents (87% of the participants) believe an increase in unemployment rate because of Syrian migrants. Similarly, most of them (73 % of the participants) argue that health system and hospitals are getting deteriorated because of the Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa.^{vi} These multiple response sets can only be analyzed descriptively. Nevertheless, it is obvious that participants have some concerns and anxieties even though they have cultural similarities with Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. The most significant concerns are about economic problems (increase in unemployment) and public services. In the next section, using inferential statistics, findings from the sample are aimed to be generalized to larger population (to Şanlıurfa residents).

Research Results

The study aims to provide an overview of participants' attitude toward Syrian migrants in terms of gender. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine whether there is a relationship between gender and approaches to Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. The test confirms the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between gender and individual's attitude toward Syrian migrants: In a broad sense, the participants' gender difference exerts a significant influence on their attitude toward Syrian migrants. Women, (other than social relations, such as having relations with Syrians or helping them financially) have more positive attitudes toward Syrians than men. Thus, women are more likely to describe Syrians positively than men:

For instance, women are more likely to describe Syrians as religious than men ($X^2= 9.780$, $p<0.005$). Overall, 22.6 per cent of male Şanlıurfa residents describe Syrian migrants as religious compared to 29.3 per cent of female residents. Similarly, male residents (27.5 %) are less likely to describe Syrians as hard-working individuals compared to female residents (37.2 %) ($X^2= 21.150$, $p<0.000$). As for being harmed by Syrians, women less likely to report that they are harmed by Syrians (27.8 %) compared to men (28.9 %).

Nevertheless, when it comes to economic support, having social relations, or supporting Syrians to have Turkish citizenship, the results have changed: Women are less likely than men to give aid in kind to Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa or to help them financially ($X^2= 39.389$,

$p < 0.000$). In addition, women are less likely (27.8 %) than men (36.5 %) to have social relations with Syrian migrants in the city. This could be due to the fact that labour force participation of women in Şanlıurfa is low.^{vii} As for approving Syrians to have Turkish citizenship, it is seen that women are significantly less likely to approve Syrians to naturalized in Turkey (16.4 %) compared to men (21.3 %) ($X^2=8.641$, $p < 0.005$).

Secondly, the Independent Samples *t* Test is used to analyse statistical differences between Social Distance Scores toward Syrians and variables such as gender and giving financial aid to Syrians in Şanlıurfa. The results show that social distance scores of residents decline in relation to gender differences, economic aid tendencies, history of violence and naturalization attitudes: Social Distance Scores (SDS) of female residents ($M=1.34$) toward Syrians is significantly lower than men ($M=1.43$) ($t=3.552$, $p < 0.000$). Similarly, the residents, who declare that they were damaged by Syrians ($t=13.043$, $p < 0.000$, $M=1.13$), who do not give any financial aid or aid in kind to Syrians ($t=-8.834$, $p < 0.000$, $M=1.23$), or who do not approve Syrians to have Turkish citizenship ($t=-27.329$, $p < 0.000$, $M=1.25$), are more distant toward Syrian migrants than those who were not damaged by Syrian migrants ($M=1.47$), who support Syrian migrants financially ($M=1.46$), and who approved Syrians to be naturalized ($M=1.95$).

Regression Results

In the study it is expected that the main basis of Turkish citizens' social distance toward high number of Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa are related to the crime and social disorder (the worries about living with Syrians, being harmed by Syrians), supporting them financially (financial aid or aid in kind), policy preferences about them (such as whether they should be sent back when the war is over), Syrians' return, Syrians' living place preferences, naturalization of Syrians,) beliefs about Syrian migrants' personalities (describing Syrians negative or positively), and linguistic tolerance (feelings about Arabic signboards). The results in the Table 3< are in line with the expectations.

It shows regression results for the determinants of the social distance scores of Şanlıurfa residents toward Syrian migrants. Although Turkish residents in Şanlıurfa have cultural similarities with Syrian migrants; since the number of Syrian migrants in the city is very high, it is expected that several issues would stick out in the eye of residents that could cause them to become socially distant from Syrian migrants. The regression model is significant $F(24, 892) = 51.146$, $p < 0.000$, accounting for 57% of the variance. In short, it shows that 57 per cent of the variance in the social distance scores of Turkish citizens in Şanlıurfa can be explained by the categories of perceived crime and social disorder, beliefs about Syrian migrants' personalities, and linguistic tolerance, as well as ideas support of Syrians' naturalization or their return.



Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Coefficients		Unstandardized		Standardized	Sig.
Model		Coefficients		Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	1.491	.113		.000
	Age	.006	.010	.015	.581
	Eudcation	.017	.009	.051	.069
	Worries about-they could hurt me or my family	-.065	.014	-.150	.000
	Worries about-we could lose our jobs	.015	.013	.031	.262
	Worries about-they might corrupt our children	-.053	.015	-.106	.000
	Worries about-they might marry with another wife (a second wife)	-.023	.011	-.050	.037
	Dummy-Hurt by Syrians-oneself	-.049	.031	-.046	.119
	Dummy-Hurt by Syrians-anyone in his or her family	-.006	.033	-.005	.857
	Dummy-Hurt by Syrians-anyone in his or her neighborhood	-.070	.031	-.062	.024
	Dummy-Giving financial aid or aid in kind to Syrians	.048	.025	.043	.057
	Various policy preferences about Syrians	.035	.013	.067	.008
	Ideas about Syrians return to Syria	.032	.012	.074	.005
	Syrian living place preferences	.022	.009	.059	.010
	Dummy-Syrians Naturalization (Yes or No)	.255	.037	.185	.000
	Dummy-Syrians as hardworking	.039	.029	.034	.178
	Dummy-Syrians as clean	.217	.049	.128	.000
	Dummy-Syrians as kind	.046	.041	.033	.264
	Dummy-Syrians as honest	.086	.056	.046	.126
	Dummy-Syrians as educated	.071	.037	.051	.058
	Dummy-Syrians as religious	.072	.032	.059	.024
	Dummy-Being disturbed by Arabic Signboard	-.130	.028	-.119	.000
	Dummy-Gender	-.043	.025	-.043	.079
	Dummy-Marital Status	-.013	.028	-.011	.652
	Ethnic self-reports	.031	.016	.046	.047
a Dependent Variable: Social Distance					

Starting with the category of perceived crime and social disorder, residents' social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa is mainly shaped by their worries about getting hurt by Syrians (oneself or his or her family, $b=-0.15$, $p<0.000$) and by their worries about Syrians

having bad impact on their children ($b=-0.106$, $p<0.000$). About the category of beliefs about Syrian migrants' personalities; the model shows that Turkish residents' ideas about Syrians' cleanness ($b=0.128$, $p<0.000$) shapes their social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa.

About the category of language tolerance, the model shows that ideas about Arabic signboards in Urfa ($b=-0.119$ $p<0.000$) shapes their social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. About the category of support of Syrians' naturalization or their return; according to the model that residents' social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa is affected by their ideas about Syrians to return to Syria after the war ($b=0.074$ $p<0.005$), or by their support of Syrians' naturalization ($b= 0.185$, $p<0.000$).

The study results suggest that if the number of migrants is higher than a city or a neighborhood absorbs, social distance increases because of three main anxieties and concerns: increase in criminality (perceived crime), erosion in identity (and maybe norms, that is social disorder), and presence of parallel societies (integration problems). First, when Turkish residents' anxieties about getting hurt by Syrians or about Syrians to hurt their families are getting low (perceived crime and social disorder), then they are expected to have closer social relations with Syrian migrants. Thus, if Turkish residents would believe that criminality would increase because of Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa, then would become more distant to Syrians.

In addition, if residents' anxieties about Syrians' having bad impact on their children are getting low (social disorder and erosion of norms), then it is expected for them to have higher willingness to approve having interaction with Syrians. That is, if Turkish residents' ideas about Syrian migrants and their possible effects on identity in general, and on their children in particular would be negative, then they would become more distant to Syrians. Similarly, if Turkish citizens in Şanlıurfa would not be disturbed by Arabic signboards (linguistic tolerance), then it is more likely for them to have higher willingness to approve having interaction with them. Not having prejudice against migrants but having positive beliefs about them is also important: If Şanlıurfa residents describe Syrians as clean, then it is possible for them to be socially closer to Syrian migrants.

At last, if residents in Şanlıurfa believe that Syrians would return their home after the war, or if they support naturalization of Syrians, then they are expected to be socially closer to Syrian migrants. This could be due to the fact that residents might have concerns about Syrian migrants' motivation about integration. So that, for them, naturalization or return migration might the possible answers to the question of integration.

Discussion and Conclusions

By assuming social distance as one of the several indicators of social cohesion and the number of migrants being more important than cultural similarities when explaining social cohesion, this study aims to discuss and analyse the determinants of Turkish citizens' social distance toward Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. The main reason why this study focuses on Şanlıurfa case is that Syrian migrant population density is high in the city, where Syrians and residents have cultural similarities (language primarily) while residents are distant to Syrians. The study assumes that there is a close and direct relationship between Turkish citizens' social distance toward Syrians and factors that can be categorized as perceived crime and social disorder, beliefs about Syrian migrants' personalities, and linguistic tolerance.



According to descriptive results, most of the respondents believe an increase in unemployment rate because of Syrian migrants; and most of them argue that health system and hospitals are getting deteriorated because of the Syrian migrants in Şanlıurfa. That is, participants have cultural similarities with Syrian migrants, but they still have some concerns and anxieties about economic problems (increase in unemployment) and deterioration of public services. More importantly, the multiple regression results show that, while the number of migrants is higher than a city or a neighbourhood absorbs, social distance escalate among the residents because of three main anxieties and concerns: increase in criminality (perceived crime), erosion in identity (and maybe norms, that is social disorder), and presence of parallel societies (integration problems). Similar to the literature, when Turkish citizens' crime perception and social disorder anxieties are getting low then they can be expected to become socially closer to Syrians. Describing Syrian migrants as clean, that is having positive beliefs about Syrian migrants' personalities affects individuals' willingness to approve having interaction with Syrians positively. Besides, if Turkish citizens in Şanlıurfa have linguistic tolerance toward Arabic signboards, then they are expected to be socially closer to Syrian migrants. The results also indicate that if residents in Şanlıurfa believe in Syrians' return to their country, or if they support naturalization of Syrians in Turkey, then they are expected to have higher willingness to be socially closer to Syrians.

Şanlıurfa is an ideal case for testing immigration management and for understanding whether cultural similarities could cause any advantage or disadvantage for adaptation or social acceptance. Studies conducted in Şanlıurfa reveal that even cultural similarities have been denied by the local community. Compared to similar studies conducted in Turkey, the distance to Syrians (such as rejecting signs in Arabic) determined at a higher level in Şanlıurfa reveals the necessity of re-evaluating the role of cultural similarity in social cohesion. Stephan's negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety approaches, which are about threats "arise from negative stereotypes the in-group has about the out-group" and arise from "anxiety the in-group experiences in the process of interaction with members of the out-group," (Croucher, 2017) could support the results of this study: Although cultural similarity plays a positive role at the beginning of human mobility; when it is understood by the host society that immigrants will not move anymore and stay in host country, they can easily ignore the similarities. They even perceive immigrants (and/or migrants) threat and be alienated from them. For social cohesion, improving public services, reducing security concerns of the society and social acceptance play a greater role. In this context, the ethnic and religious characteristics of immigrants play a secondary role in the social cohesion processes.

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ⁱ In this study, Syrian nationals under temporary protection law in Turkey will be called as Syrian migrants.

ⁱⁱ For further discussion, please see Özçürümez, S. and İçduygu, A. (2020). *Zorunlu Göç Deneyimi ve Toplumsal Bütünleşme: Kavramlar, Modeller ve Uygulamalar ile Türkiye*, Istanbul, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications.

ⁱⁱⁱ For further discussions about diasporas and ghetto, please see for instance, Bauböck, R. and Faist, T. (eds.). (2010). *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Rotterdam, Amsterdam Univ. Press and Kaya, A. (2019). *Populism and Heritage in Europe Lost in Diversity and Unity*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2019.

^{iv} Interviews with Turkish citizens do not include Syrians who have acquired Turkish citizenship.

^v *Worries about living with Syrians*: Participants were asked to indicate worries about living with Syrians (e.g., They could hurt me or my family) ranging from feeling nothing (no worries) to feeling completely (high level of worries) on a five-point scale. *Being harmed by Syrians*: Participants were asked whether they are hurt by Syrians (or their family, or their neighbours). *Supporting Syrians (financial aid or aid in kind)*: Participants were asked whether they help Syrians (financially or aid in kind). *Policy preferences about Syrians*: Participants were asked to express their policy preferences about Syrians (multiple choice question, one option). *Syrians’ return*: Participants were asked to express their ideas about Syrians’ return ranging from none of them would return to all of them would return on a five-point scale. *Syrians’ living place preferences*: Participants were asked to express their preferences about possible living places for Syrians. *Naturalization of Syrians*: This variable is recoded as supporting naturalization of Syrians or not. *Describing Syrians negative or positively*: These variables are recoded as, for instance, they are hardworking or not. *Feelings about Arabic signboards*: This variable is recoded as are being disturbed to see Arabic signboards in Şanlıurfa or not.

^{vi} Further tests, such as the chi-square test of independence, could not be performed for these questions containing multiple response variables (since they are correlated).

^{vii} For further discussion, please see İnan, F. and Aşık, G. (2015). *Making Economies Work for Women: Female Labour Force Participation in Turkey*. OXFAM and TEPAV Report.