



*“In Turkey, at the moment,
there are two different
communities living side by
side, but
not together.”*

An Exploration of How Charities and Academics Make Sense of Refugee’s Lived Experience of Integration in the Context of Turkish Leadership.

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1. Acknowledgements

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2. Introduction

This research paper aims to investigate the lived experience of refugee integration in Istanbul in the context of Turkish leadership, from the perspective of charities and academic professionals.

In particular, this research paper delves into the complicated dynamics pertaining to refugee integration in Istanbul under Erdoğan's leadership. The lived experience of refugee integration is crucial to encapsulate to ensure that the experience of the refugees in Istanbul was explored in the best way. This research paper is grounded on the premise, as emerged from the data, that Turkish leadership is currently not effectively facilitating refugee integration. The rationale behind choosing to understand the lived experience of refugee integration in Istanbul from the perspective of charities and academic professionals will be further expanded upon in our methodology section.

Turkey hosts four million refugees and has been the largest refugee hosting country in the world for the past nine years (UNHCR, 2023). At the end of 2022, there were over 3.53 million Syrians under Temporary Protection and 305,000 International Protection applicants and status holders in Turkey – 560,000 of which were registered in Istanbul alone (UNHCR, 2023; Brookings, 2018). As such, this research paper has chosen to focus on an urban area in Turkey, namely Istanbul, due to it hosting the largest number of refugees in the country.

Furthermore, it could be argued that the current state of the Turkish economy – the Turkish lira greatly depreciating against the US dollar since the end of 2021 and rising inflation rates (reaching 72% year-on-year in March 2022), have led to the growing perception that the presence of refugees' have resulted in the stretching of Turkey's limited resources and services (UNHCR, 2023).

With the Turkish government's active role in advocating for greater international responsibility-sharing, this research paper aims to investigate how refugee integration has been addressed in the context of Turkish leadership. Due to the contention regarding the definition of the term 'integration', it has become a central concept in debates regarding the rights, settlement and adaptation of refugees (Strang and Ager, 2010). This research paper aims to analyse integration through the lens of education, culture, and economics.

This research paper will be structured in the following way. Firstly, it will analyse the lived experience of refugee integration in Istanbul based on existing literature, highlighting significant hurdles faced by the refugees due to existing government policies. As the integration of refugees is critical to their experiences in a country, we have decided to look at refugees' lived experience of integration from three key components, namely educational integration, cultural integration, as well as economic integration. These elements involve an exploration of potential and actual policies and from national actors with the intention to consider the impact of Turkish national leadership on the experience of integration for refugees. Subsequently, this research paper will delve into the rationale for our chosen methodology of conducting semi-structured interviews with charities, and academics.

The findings and analysis section follows, consisting of a thorough exploration of the data collected pertaining to the dynamics of refugee integration with the use of thematic analysis.

This section will discuss themes affecting the lived experiences of refugee integration in Istanbul, such as Turkish Nationalism and Attitudes, Globalised Leadership, and National Leadership Efforts from the perspective of charities and academic professionals. The finding and analysis section will be followed by our concluding remarks on the lived experience of refugee integration in Istanbul in the context of Turkish leadership.

3. Literature Review

This literature review begins with an analysis of existing literature regarding education. This is because education has repeatedly been highlighted in both secondary research and primary data as an integral factor in facilitating integration and impacting a positive or negative

reception of refugees from a host society. The issue of education is especially pertinent to this review as one interviewee observed the fact that the Turkish “education system is a very assimilationist education system” (Interview 2) - illuminating the fact that whilst education is significant for integration, it has been intentionally designed to liken refugees to the Turkish population, which could be regarded as exceeding its purpose.

Secondly, the review will discuss cultural integration since existing literature has pointed to the fact that cultural differences – including linguistic barriers – enhance the difficulty for Syrian refugees to interact with Turkish people (Zelal, 2020). This finding is specifically related to Syrian and Turkish students, therefore depicting the inextricable link between the components. Zelal (2020) suggests the involvement of Syrian students into education necessitates enabling strategies for cultural integration, which circles back to the precarious economic situation of young Syrians associated with getting a work permit – thus causing many Syrians to not want to or be able to enter higher education.

Lastly, the review addresses economic integration, given its significance in existing literature and primary data. For instance, the second interviewee states that “the economic crisis – the competition for the resources” has contributed to shifts in social sentiment against refugees. This is evident in both the labour market with the Syrians rivalling Turkish nationals in the agriculture and service sectors (Osmanbaşıoğlu, 2019) and it is also clear with the use of public resources – as interviewee two contends this is most clear in a hospital. Interviewee two explains that this is because the health budget for refugees comes from a different source than for Turkish people (namely, Facility for Refugees in Turkey European Union), hence while waiting in a hospital queue, Syrian refugees may “skip the line” causing the Turkish person to feel intimidated.

Accordingly, the literature and components discussed will explore the research statement by contextualising the discourse regarding refugee integration. Furthermore, the research conducted will expand upon these debates to provide the perspective of academics and charities.

3.1 Educational Integration

Literature analysing the impact of President Erdogan’s policies aimed at facilitating social integration of refugees come to a consensus, agreeing that they are simplistic and constrained by a lack of appreciation for integration’s multi-dimensional nature. Zelal (2020) notes that while education is one of the key priorities of the Turkish government to expedite integration, higher education remains inaccessible to most refugees due to the policy’s not accounting for intersecting barriers such as strict Turkish language requirements and cultural dissimilarities (Zelal, 2020). Hence, Zelal suggests policy recommendations regarding the improvement of Turkish language courses, so staff are better able to understand specific issues faced by refugees. There is also a further recommendation to intervene with psychological barriers – particularly to aid Syrian refugees coping with distress – since despite Syrian university students being identified as high-risk for mental health problems, “they are not given basic psychological support at universities in Turkey” (p.13).

But these suggestions come with their own unintended consequences which could further hinder refugee integration, limiting the practical application of the findings. These issues reflect a reoccurring theme in the analysis of integration and Turkish leadership; that the complexity of the refugee crisis and severe dichotomy prevalent in Turkish society results in greater difficulty in formulating policies which sufficiently aid refugee integration without creating a trade-off with other policy objectives. Nonetheless, it remains that while policies have certainly been passed to aid social integration, they have not sufficiently acknowledged the nuances within the refugee experience.

Similarly, Çelik et al (2018)'s study echoes this argument, finding that the national policy of creating Temporary Education Centers (TECs) for Syrian refugees instead of adapting Public Schools (PS), which are designed for a homogenous Turkish population are counterproductive in facilitating integration due to the perception of "otherising" refugees. The study briefly asserts that this is somewhat caused by external factors, thus schools in discriminatory environments do not sufficiently implement macro-educational policies (Çelik et al, 2018).

Additionally, Çelik et al contend that TECs and PCs both have significant limitations in integrating Syrian refugee children, but interviewees consider PS key for long-term plans to stay in Turkey, to enable their children to learn Turkish and to integrate them into society. While the study does not consider this to be the main factor, the narrative is further expanded on by this research paper, as it explores how the extremely centralized nature of Erdogan's leadership may be a constraint on refugee integration. As such, this paper's focus on leadership allows for a more direct inspection of the impact of national leadership on the integration of refugees which is not deeply explored in the literature.

3.2 Cultural integration

Literature regarding cultural integration suggests one of the main barriers is spatial segregation. It is known that refugees have settled in areas of Istanbul that are predominantly inhabited by lower income groups - "where the urban poor are clustered" (Erdogan, 2017). An observation found that 'in-group' interactions were common amongst the Syrian refugee's - where Syrian refugees would frequently engage and interact with other Syrian refugee's rather than members of the host countries - resulting in a weak relationship with the Turks (Arslan's et al, 2021).

Whilst some literature on cultural experiences indicates that refugee's experience a cultural shock when coming to Turkey (İçduygu et al, 2016), Arslan's et al. (2021) study indicates that refugee's experience a strong sense of 'belonging' to Turkish society - especially concerning religious and ethnic attributes. Their study indicated that refugees encounter no difficulty in their cultural lives due to the 'shared identity' they have with Turkish people - Muslim identity being the most significant factor in fostering a sense of commonality. However, in day-to-day interactions, refugees encounter significant challenges and a sense of alienation in their interactions and relationships at the community, group and individual level. Thus, refugees experience a lack of interaction with locals whilst simultaneously feeling like they belong in the society overall. This can be termed as "noninteractive integration" (p.16).

There are, however, other factors at play within interactions between refugees and locals which are neglected by this study - such as the lack of acceptance from members of the host country.

Akar and Erdoğan (2019) address this point, highlighting that some Turkish people not only have hostile attitudes towards refugees but state that they are ‘overstaying guests.’ This point has been underscored in interview one (1), who states that the government did not foresee possible problems of refugees staying for the long-term. Literature suggests that it is important that both the refugees and the members from the host country want to, and are committed to, pursuing strong integration. This is because the result of the overall integration depends on the interaction between the refugees and the members of the host country.

Therefore, the existing literature indicates that the foundation of a culture of coexistence lies in physical proximity, but it is maintained by ongoing social interactions and economic activity – as addressed in the following section.

3.3 Economic Integration

The purpose of the research conducted in this section of the report is to build upon existing literature regarding refugee experiences of economic integration in Turkey, more specifically in Istanbul. Present literature raises the point of an unequal distribution of refugees and subsequent unequal burden sharing amongst nations (Osmanbaşoğlu, 2019), whereby the concern of such a large influx of refugees in Turkey has caused stress on “Turkey’s young legal system” of asylum and immigration as well as stressing its limited resources (İçduygu and Evin Millet, 2016). İçduygu and Millet (2016) note that a major step forward in responsibility sharing has been the deal between the EU and Turkey – agreed upon in March 2016 – and highlight the significant role the EU has played in “the reforms made in the policies and practices of migration and asylum regime in Turkey” (p.7).

Conversely, Osmanbaşoğlu (2019) contends that the contemporary ambiguity in refugee procedures is the international criticism Turkey receives for its limitations on refugee status – namely that Turkey “does not recognise people from outside of Europe as refugees” (p.192), notwithstanding the fact that Turkey has been the most welcoming country following the Syrian crises (p.197). As such, this contradictory and contentious discourse is integral to this paper since it reflects the lack of unanimity amongst people in Turkey - in relation to their perceptions of refugees – which ultimately affects the lived experiences of economic integration for refugees in the country.

A further point expressed by Almasri (2023), is that “economic and political motivations in response to foreign policy goals... has re-enforced hierarchies in the context of the Syria crisis response” (p.31). Almasri’s data was drawn from 44 semi-structured interviews to examine the differentiation of refugee reception depending on the nationality of the refugee group. This point is notable to the project because it explains why “integration of refugees” could be too simplified, given the multiple factors involved. Moreover, a reoccurring theme in the literature about economic integration is the influence of the relationship between the EU and Turkey on refugee policies. It is noteworthy that Almasri (2023) contends that while such policies interact with the EU, “they are also a product of Turkey’s own foreign and national policy interests” (p.35).

3.4 Employment Restrictions

The existing literature pertaining to the Turkish government's shift in policy position from one of 'hospitality' to 'integration' agrees that a 'long-term, sustainable framework of integration for Syrian workers is still missing' (Kaymaz et al., 2016, p.1). Despite the January 2016 decree by Erdogan to ease Syrian access to the domestic labour market, the total number of Syrians with work permits remains significantly short of what was expected. Del Carpio and Wagner (2016) posit that although labour market integration does not ensure social and cultural integration, both of which are major components of a refugees' overall integration, it is a determining factor of a refugees' ability to become an active member of their new community.

Whilst the literature noted does not disagree on the problems and causes of the dire economic situation faced by the Syrian refugees, they build upon each other to strengthen a discourse about the steps needed to be taken by the Erdogan's government moving forward.

The reasons for the low number of work permits issued by the Turkish government - one of the main reasons for the difficulty to integrate into the labour market - is due to the geographic limitation and employment quota put in place (Kaymaz et al, 2016). As Syrians are only able to work in their registered provinces, existing laws place a cap on the permitted number of Syrian employees in a company (10%).

Moreover, the relatively high cost of formal employment results in a downward pressure on wages in the informal sector and high skilled Syrians leaving for other countries (Kaymaz et al., 2016, p.4). Del Carpio and Wagner (2016) comment that the initial geographic limitations were implemented to prevent refugees from crowding border towns, reflecting the initial securitised approach adopted. These geographical restrictions, in practice, have also resulted in the 'illegalisation' of Afghans refugees. This "illegalisation" directly impacts their ability to access aid due to the lack of registration and formal documents, exacerbating the cycle of mutually re-enforced exclusion through both Turkish state policies and aid programmes (Almasri, 2023).

Additionally, growing tensions between Syrian refugees (3.5% of total Turkish population) and Turkish citizens, suggests difficulties for the current employment policies (Kaymaz et al., 2016, p.2). While Del Carpio and Wagner (2016) argue that a multi-level governance approach grounded on the principles of collaboration and cooperation is imperative to ease the shift of state approach from humanitarian aid to livelihoods support moving forward, this research paper aims to explore the practicality of the proposed approach.

The information drawn from the above literature regarding socio-economic barriers to refugee integration highlights a multifaceted discourse between academics, organisations and the general public, which is necessary to contextualise this paper and exemplify the complexity of policies and leadership in an increasingly polarised population (Yurdakul, 2020).

Over the course of this review, the need to examine the lived experience of integration for refugees in Istanbul is reinforced. This is because the paper focuses on an urban area, namely, Istanbul as opposed to Turkey at large. The experiences of refugees from different ethnic backgrounds are drawn upon and questioned, presenting three points of dynamic and

overlapping analysis as aforementioned. These points allow the research statement and findings to be nuanced, by portraying the relation between these components of integration, rather than separate and individual factors.

4. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative methodology to address the research question. Semi-structured interviews conducted both online, over Zoom, and face to face in Istanbul and the UK were the method of data collection. This method is typified by “a series of predetermined but open-ended questions” (Givn, 2008) which allows for a balance to be struck between unstructured and structured interviews. The course of the interview was regulated through the

utilisation of an interview guide (Appendix A) which ensured that that both meaningful and relevant data was collected. Due to many of the interviewees speaking English as a second language, the semi-structured framework became particularly instrumental as it allowed for clarification or further discussion at any point where the language barrier caused possible misunderstanding.

The interviewees selected were grounded in either the expertise of the academics in the specific field of refugees in Istanbul or the involvement of charities with refugees in Istanbul. It was important that the interviewees were either situated in Istanbul or had experience researching and working in Istanbul, since it is the city in Turkey with the highest volume of refugees (Statista, n.d.) and therefore most relevant to the study.

Conducting interviews with refugees would have been more directly related to our research question as it would give us a more personal understanding of refugees' experience of integration. However, due to ethical considerations, it was clear that academics and charities would make for the best participants and therefore, our sample of charities and academics was selected by employing convenience sampling. This, however, meant that our research would be limited in respect to how personal the data obtained would be. Capturing the refugee experience through the lens of third parties means that our study reproduces certain hierarchies and power relations at play by deciding who gets to tell the stories of refugees and who does not.

Our analytical strategy involved verbatim transcription of the interviews and then thematic analysis of the corpus in order to code and identify themes and patterns (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Following the steps defined by Braune and Clarke (2012), we familiarised ourselves with the data, devised initial codes, generated themes, reviewed the themes, defined these themes, and then interpreted and reported these themes. In respect to identifying themes, inductive techniques were applied as we had a vague idea of the themes we were interested in based on previous literature. This however, meant that we had to ensure that unexpected themes were not overlooked, and this was ensured through creating a 'miscellaneous theme' code.

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the research, us as researchers coming from a mix of academic disciplines, and thematic analysis being a method for the subjective interpretation of data collected (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), we were able to incorporate and understand the data from a myriad of perspectives and outlooks. Upon reflection, our lack of Turkish identity, none of us as researchers being of Turkish ethnicity or nationality, meant that those being interviewed could speak to us more openly and with greater confidence - knowing that if they were to say something critical of the government or controversial about the refugee experience, there would be no ramifications. However, this also created a possible language barrier since none of us as researchers speak Turkish which could create trouble in understanding the point participants may be trying to get across. This also meant that our participants were those who can speak English and consequently, those who are more privileged with an access to better education. In addition to this, being female undergraduate researchers from a prestigious

university allowed us to access contacts, particularly academics, more easily and reassured participants that all data would be handled with strict care and confidentiality.

The identities of all interviewees are anonymised to guarantee their privacy and safety and all the ethical considerations within our research align with the guidelines set out by the “LSE Research Ethics Policy”. Informed consent was taken from the interviewees both written (Appendix B) and verbally prior to the interview and participants were reassured that they could withdraw their consent if they were no longer comfortable participating.

5. Findings and Analysis

	Theme 1 Turkish Nationalism and Attitudes	Theme 2 Globalised Leadership	Theme 3 National Government/Leadership Efforts: i. Direct Policy Issues ii. Wider Economic Policy Issues
<i>Interview 1</i>	10	9	15

<i>Interview 2</i>	8	3	22
<i>Interview 3</i>	5	5	11
<i>Interview 4</i>	5	5	12
<i>Interview 5</i>	8	9	19

Figure 1: Frequencies for themes established and counted for each interview

Subsequent to the use of Braune and Clarke’s (2012) steps to conduct a thematic analysis, there was an identification and emergence of overarching themes across the lived experience of integration of refugees through the lens of academics and charities. The following themes: Turkish Nationalism and Attitudes; Globalised Leadership; and National Government/Leadership efforts which was further split into the two sub-themes of Direct Policy Issues and Wider Economic Policy Issues were established.

5.1 Theme 1: Turkish Nationalism and Attitudes

This theme essentially looks at the (rising) Turkish nationalism prevalent across Turkey and how these social attitudes have shaped refugee experience, primarily for the worst. Turkish nationalism being a hindrance to the integration of refugees was a reoccurring theme found in all 5 interviews and therefore is a key theme to explore and analyse.

At the arrival of the influx of refugees in Turkey, “people thought ‘okay these people are guests’” (Interview 2) and therefore were welcoming and willing to accommodate the refugees for, what they thought was, the time being. However, in line with what Erdoğan (2019) suggested about Turkish people viewing refugees as ‘overstaying guests’, it quickly became apparent to the Turkish people that the refugees would be in Turkey for much longer than anticipated and it was not long before the presence of refugees became a political tool harnessed by politicians and Turkish nationalists to further marginalise refugees. Furthermore, “[The Turkish people] wanted [the refugees] to live in harmony in the country but they didn’t really want them to be integrated” (Interview 2) displaying how although the Turkish people wished no harm on the refugees, they made it clear that Turkey is for the Turkish. Consequently, the rising Turkish nationalism and focus on this ‘Turkish identity’ in conjunction with the ‘in-group interactions’ mentioned by Arslan’s et al (2021) whereby Syrian refugees mix with other Syrians as opposed to Turkish people has resulted in “two different communities living side by side but not together” (Interview 1) and therefore has made the integration of refugees into Turkish society very difficult.

In addition to this, the presumed similarity between Turkish culture and the cultures of the refugees, such as Syrians and Afghans, by the West has only contributed to the anti-refugee sentiment in Turkey as the Turkish people are even more driven to show that they have their own Turkish identity as opposed to a collective ‘Muslim identity’. Interview 4, a Turkish Academic, particularly engaged with this notion and made it clear that although “Europe assumes that they are similar because they are Muslims, it doesn’t work like this at all” and that all Muslims are “not a homogenous group of people”. This is particularly salient as many international leaders use this notion of Turkey having a similar culture to those refugees who are coming to covertly justify their lack of involvement however, this is not the case at all, and this also brings us to the second theme established.

5.2 Theme 2: Globalised Leadership

Globalised leadership refers to the influence of international bodies on Turkish leadership and refugee integration. Interview 1 provides a succinct insight into public opinions regarding globalised leadership, firmly stating that “there is no burden sharing. The West is getting the ones (refugees) who are more educated and leaving the others to Turkey and Turkey has to, according to international law, leave its borders open for these people.” The notion of “burden” is a reoccurring concept across all 5 interviews, evidenced by statements such as “I do think there is a huge burden on our (Turkish) shoulders” (Interview 3).

While all interviews claim this to be a shared sentiment across Turkish society, further literature signifies that the influence of globalised leadership is not so facile. Osmanbaşıoğlu highlights that the international community has introduced several initiatives to facilitate refugee integration, such as a project by the UNCHR aimed at providing free Turkish courses to Syrians (Osmanbaşıoğlu, 2019). Given the significance of language barriers as an impediment to integration into Turkish society, this action demonstrates the existence of global and national joint efforts to reduce substantial barriers.

Furthermore, the perspective offered by the interviews is not the only angle through which to consider the lack of burden-sharing, as it has also allowed Turkey to maintain its own interests regarding how it handles the high levels of refugees. While Turkey’s refugee policy certainly interacts with the EU’s conditions and aims, it is also a product of Turkey’s own foreign and national policy interests, forming a multi-layered refugee regime which accounts for the various components making up Turkish society (Almasri, 2023). Therefore, it is not the case that globalised leadership is pushing a refugee policy onto Turkey without any input from national leadership. Instead, Globalised leadership is a complex theme working on multiple levels not always recognised by the general public. Its influence over Turkey’s quantity of refugees does not mean an equal influence over how national leadership handles those refugees, thus Turkey maintains a level of agency within its own borders.

Globalised leadership and Turkish nationalism are very strongly interlinked, with the former exacerbating the latter. Interview 1 and 4 both highlight how the international community assumes that the shared religion between most Syrian refugees and Turkish people translates into enough commonality to create smooth integration, thus Turkey is a better environment for them than the rest of Europe. This assumption is not shared by much of the Turkish population. Regarding a deal by the EU to pay Turkey €6 billion in exchange for stopping the refugees entering Europe, Interview 1 asserts that “I don’t know why our government signed this agreement because I mean it is not just money. For example, if we say that lets Turkey give ten times more money to the UK, to Germany, to France, to Italy, and send half of these people to those countries – will they accept? Because money is not the main problem here. I mean there are social, cultural, security and other problems that this creates in Turkey.” This argument shows that the Turkish leadership’s prioritisation of financial gain is not a shared sentiment across Turkish society despite substantial economic issues within the nation. Therefore, the decision to accept this deal is perceived as the leadership lacking awareness of the complexity within Turkish society and refugee relations, creating a disconnect between the leaders and the general public. The sizeable impact of global leadership on this fractured relationship illustrates

that the globalised nature of the modern world constructs an environment wherein national leadership cannot operate in isolation without international influences acting upon it - but this does not erode national sovereignty in its entirety. As such, the impact of Turkish leadership on the integration of refugees has shown to be constrained by international bodies, but this still leaves space for Turkish leadership to practice their own agency.

5.3 Theme 3: National Leadership Efforts

This theme encompasses the efforts made by Turkish national leadership to facilitate the integration of refugees and will be analysed in two sub-sections, (i) Direct Policy Issues and (ii) Wider Economic Policy Issues.

In subtheme 1, two of the interviews (see interviews 2 and 4) mention how the influx of refugees was an issue Turkey had to deal with for the first time due to the Syrian Civil War. Interview 4 points out that “they (the leadership) didn't have any strategy, any plans – they were just accepting refugees” and Interview 2 reflects that “we have never entangled with this issue of integration in Turkey for the refugees.” The prevailing policy therefore was to create and operate on a sense of brotherhood illustrated by Interview 3's assertion that “there is a belief wise, culture wise, assignments given on people - to the locals especially – saying that ‘we believe in the same things, we have the same cultural heritage etc...’” The success of this policy has been largely minimal, with copious amounts of literature describing high levels of anti-refugee sentiment across Turkish society. Widespread beliefs that the refugees are “overstaying guests” (Akbar and Erdoğan, 2019) clearly exemplify that ‘brotherhood’ is a largely missing component in the complex refugee-Turkish relations, despite this being a popular sentiment propagated by Turkish national leadership. Turkish leadership also prioritised certain avenues of integration for their direct policymaking, one of them being education: “they (Syrian refugees) didn't need to pay any tuition fees for Turkish Universities” (Interview 1). In turn, “the latest numbers of Syrian refugees in higher education is around 60,000. This is quite about the world average.” (Interview 1). The importance of this focus is highlighted by the Ager and Strang's research which found education to be both a ‘means and marker’ of integration (Zelal, 2020). Therefore, national leadership efforts have been concentrated on areas that need it most, with sizeable and quantifiable impacts. However, despite these successes, direct policies have been unable to adequately account for one of the biggest barriers to refugee integration – social attitudes. Accordingly, many Turkish students consider the accommodations made for refugee students as hindering their own opportunities as it creates additional competition for university spaces, further deepening the division between the two groups. Therefore, the impact of direct refugee-related policies should be considered from multiple dimensions including social.

In subtheme 2, despite government efforts regarding refugees, the wider economic crisis and issues have meant that Turkish resources were already insubstantial, gaining prominence as the refugee crisis and economic crisis have deepened over the years since 2015, thus competition for these resources have become even more strained. Interviews 2 and 4 demonstrate how this led to refugees becoming scapegoated and blamed for the economic difficulties. Interview 4 states “these people are competing for the same socioeconomic resources – for that reason anti-migration sentiments are increasing,” while interview 2 comments that “whenever there is a

problem in Turkey, someone will more or at one point, link it to the migrants and Syrians.” Existing literature note failures in Turkish national economic policy which did not adequately address the role of refugees in the Turkish economy thus enabling refugees to be blamed for the wider economic crisis and constraining their economic integration. An example of this is the employment restrictions which place a 10% cap on how many Syrian refugees can be employed by a company. This has resulted in an increase of refugees working in the informal economy and providing services at a much cheaper rate than their Turkish counterparts, creating economic tensions between the two groups (Kaymaz et al, 2016). Consequently, national efforts by Turkish leadership operate on a multi-dimensional level by directly impacting refugee-related policy issues while simultaneously working within the framework of the wider economic crisis and balancing other policy objectives which have been shown to conflict and result in unintended consequences for the integration of refugees.

Although these themes above are discussed separately, all are interconnected. If leaders internationally fail to recognise their duty in supporting refugees, which the academic in interview 4 made clear they do since “they [international leaders] are aware that the numbers are high and they don’t want to receive a shared percentage of these refugees”, then this puts a pressure on Turkish resources. This strain on Turkish resources due to the high volume of refugees makes it difficult for the national government to form policies to support both Turkish citizens and the refugees who are now competing for the same limited socioeconomic resources. Consequently, refugees become scapegoats for any issues the country faces, and the Turkish citizens become more nationalist in their attitudes towards refugees.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, through conducting semi-structured interviews with academics and charities this research paper has further delved into the complex dynamics surrounding refugee integration in Turkey under Erdoğan's leadership. This research paper has explored the lived experiences of refugee integration in Istanbul, focusing on key matters that emerged as recurrent themes throughout our comprehensive literature review, namely educational, cultural, and economic integration. Despite the limitation of not interviewing refugees directly, the perspectives of these participants provided valuable insights into the dynamics of refugee integration in Istanbul and the use of thematic analysis allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the data collected.

The literature review revealed significant challenges and shortcomings in the Turkish government's policies aimed at facilitating refugee integration. The education system was found to include intersecting barriers such as language and cultural dissimilarities (Zelal) 2020 as well as being designed for a homogenous Turkish population (Çelik et al, 2018), hindering refugees' access to higher education. Cultural integration was affected by spatial segregation and 'in-group' interactions (Arslan's et al, 2021), leading to weak relationships with the host society. Economic integration faced barriers such as employment restrictions and strain on resources, in addition to the fact that the labour market is not designed to foster social and cultural integration (Del Carpio and Wagner, 2016). This resulted in high levels of tensions between refugees and Turkish citizens.

One prominent theme that emerged from the research is the impact of rising Turkish nationalism on refugee integration (Interview 1). The prevailing belief in a shared Turkish identity has led to difficulties in integrating refugees into the host society as well as hostile attitudes towards refugees. This has led Turkish citizens to perceive refugees as overstaying guests – a view that was echoed during Interview 2, thereby reinforcing our findings from existing literature (Akbar and Erdoğan, 2019). Moreover, our study found that, globalized leadership, including the influence of international bodies such as the EU (Interview 4), has shaped Turkey's approach to the refugee crisis, but there is a lack of burden-sharing and a disconnect between national leadership and the public perception. This perspective was prominent across 4 out of 5 of our interviews and reinforced our findings from existing literature that there is unequal burden sharing amongst nations (Osmanbaşıoğlu, 2019). Despite some efforts made by Turkish national leadership to facilitate integration, the complex interplay of economic and political factors has hindered effective policy implementation. The economic crisis and competition for resources has also led to refugees being 'scapegoated' (Interview 2 and 4) for broader societal issues.

The analysis also revealed the interconnectedness of the themes Turkish Nationalism and Attitudes, Globalised Leadership and National Leadership efforts. This is because globalized leadership, influenced by international bodies and agreements, impacts Turkey's refugee policies and contributes to the complexity of national leadership's efforts (Interview 4 and 5). This, in turn, affects the attitudes of the Turkish population towards refugees, leading to nationalist sentiments (Interview 1 and 2) and hindering the integration process.

Moving forward, further research could involve direct interviews with refugees, as using their own voices will allow us to gain a more personal understanding of their lived experiences and perspectives – thereby enabling a richer discussion surrounding the lived experience of refugee integration within Istanbul under Erdoğan's leadership. In doing so, it would be beneficial to take less of a holistic approach, but rather narrow down on one subset of refugees, such as Syrian woman, who have their own unique experiences and challenges regarding gender and culture. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions in Turkey or with other countries facing similar challenges could be a fruitful avenue for future study as well as exploring the long-term impacts of policies and interventions on refugee integration.

Overall, the research presented in this paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on refugee integration, providing valuable insights into the complex interactions between national leadership, societal attitudes, and the experiences of refugees in Istanbul. By understanding these dynamics, policymakers and stakeholders, such as Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party, can develop more effective strategies to foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion for refugees, regardless of their origin - this will enable refugees to have better overall lived experiences within Istanbul under Erdoğan's leadership.

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Appendix

A = Interview Guide

Try to use the interviewees' own words and elaborate on what they say - what do they focus more on?

Intro:

Good morning/afternoon, thank you so much for taking the time out to speak to us. We would like to have a conversation regarding research we're doing as part of the Laidlaw Programme regarding refugee integration in Istanbul. We will be recording this [interview](#), but will not include your name or any information that could identify you/your organisation unless you consent to us doing so.

Warm up: what made you decide to get involved with this charity/cause or why did you choose to specialise/research this topic...

Main Body:

Social	
1. Have refugees dealt with any challenges since coming to Turkey?	
a.	Barriers inc. language, religion/beliefs, lifestyle
b.	Have there been any policies/changes to address these barriers?
c.	If so, have these policies had any impact on the refugees?
2. What has the social attitude towards refugees been like in the past few years?	
a.	Media, general public
b.	What do you think has been the biggest influence over this attitude? E.g. influential people, communities, education, politics
3. Has there been any regional/national support for refugees? Why (not)?	
a.	Charities, policies, leaders?
b.	Has this support been successful or unsuccessful and to what extent?
c.	Are there any areas of improvement and what/who can do this?
4. What is the status of refugees in Istanbul in relation to their right to stay?	
a.	Are there policies in place to ensure this security?
b.	If yes, how successful have these policies been?
Economic	

1. Are refugees able to find work?	
a.	If yes, what type of work do they primarily go into?
b.	Does the job offer security - if not, why?
c.	If they don't find jobs/it is difficult to do so, what are the barriers?
2.	What type of work do refugees primarily get into? a. If the nature of the work is primarily informal, what have been the contributing factors to this? b. What more can be done to address these potential challenges <i>Notes: Gig economy (no contract jobs), agricultural industry, textile industry</i>
3.	Are there any schemes available for refugees to upskill themselves? a. If yes, what schemes are available? b. Are these schemes accessible? If not, what additional support can be put in place? + why/how are they not accessible?
4.	How do you think/feel the political climate has contributed to the integration of refugees? a. What do you think the role of the political climate (if any) is towards the integration of refugees?

Cool down: thank you so much for giving us your time and insight, is there anything else that you would like to add that could be valuable to the study?

*Stick to interviewees words

*Observe if they focus more on one aspect than the other + elaborate

*Make them talk about the context - draw on leaders

B = Consent Form

LSE Laidlaw Scholars Leadership and Research Programme
London School of Economics & Political Science
Consent and information sheet

Dear ...

Thanks for your interest in this project. In this email, I give you information about the project and ask for your consent to participate. If you agree, please reply to this email, stating your name and that you agree to the statements in the table below to give your consent.

What is the study about?

We are conducting a research paper on the refugee crisis in Istanbul. We are looking at lived experience of integration of refugees in Istanbul. Our research aims to shed light on the challenges faced by refugees in Istanbul and the socio-economic barriers they face.

What will my involvement be?

The interview will be conducted in a semi-structured manner, and we anticipate that it would take approximately up to an hour to complete. The interview will be conducted in person, if this is inconvenient we can conduct it online over Zoom.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary. There are no negative consequences for you if you decide not to take part in this study.

If you decide to take part but later on you change your mind, you can let me know by [10/07/2023] - you will not have to give any explanation why.

It is also absolutely fine if you feel that you don't want to answer any specific questions – you can just tell me, and we will move on.

What will my information be used for?

Information collected will be used for the purpose of our research paper and poster, as well as individual Laidlaw reflections. There is also a possibility that group members present this work at UK conferences or in blog posts.

We assure you that any information shared during the interview will be treated with strict confidentiality, anonymized and used solely for academic purposes unless you give us permission to use your name and/or the name of the organisation.

Will my information be anonymous?

Agreed with LSE Research Ethics in June 2023.

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Your participation will be anonymous - your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study unless you give us permission to use your name and/or the name of the organisation.

If you agree to take part in the research, please complete the section below

Your name: (type first name _____ surname _____)

Please read these three statements. If you agree with the statement, put X in the box next to it.

I have read this message and had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I agree to participate in the study	
I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and that my personal information will be kept securely and destroyed at the end of the study	

Once completed, please email this back to me. Thank you!

Researcher name: Hibah Rizwan, Shafia Khan Malik, Sabah Ahmed, Elissa Chung, Ahd Hassan
Email address: h.rizwan@lse.ac.uk

If you have any questions about the study, please email P.Rauber1@lse.ac.uk

If you wish to make a complaint about this study, please email P.Rauber1@lse.ac.uk

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https://info.lse.ac.uk/Staff/divisions/Secretaries-Division/Assets/Documents/Information-Records-Management/Information-Records-Management/Privacy-Notice-for-Research-Health-v1_3-002.pdf

Agreed with LSE Research Ethics in June 2023.

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